

PASTORAL CARE AT TIMES OF BEREAVEMENT:
FUNERAL RITES FOR KOREAN METHODIST CHURCHES
IN THE UNITED STATES

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In Partial Fulfillment
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by
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ABSTRACT

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Some ethnic churches in the United States have attempted to develop appropriate funeral rites that fit their specific cultural, social, and psychological needs. They have attempted to integrate their ethnical funeral cultures with the theological perspectives of their respective denominations. The Korean Methodist Church published *The Korean Methodist Book of Worship [Yemoon]* as a source of contextual liturgies. This service book includes culturally relevant funeral rites which are sufficiently comprehensive and reflective of Korean Methodists in South Korea. However, Korean American Methodist churches affiliated with the Korean Methodist Church tend to disregard the funeral rites outlined in *The Korean Methodist Book of Worship*, because the funeral rites in this book are not appropriate for or relevant to the contexts of Korean American immigrants.

Funeral rites are culturally shaped. Therefore, developing culturally relevant funeral rites that will address the experience of immigrants living between two cultures is called for. By studying traditional Korean religious beliefs and funeral practices, the theology of traditional Methodism, Korean American theology, the funeral rites of the United Methodist and Korean Methodist churches, and relevant pastoral care literature and research, this project provides suggestions for funeral rituals for American Korean Methodists.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Korean American Immigrants' Context	13
The First Period (1903-1950)	13
The Second Period (1950-1964)	18
The Third Period (1965-Present)	20
Korean American Immigrants' Contextual Issues	22
3. Concept of Death in Korean Cultural and Religious Traditions	27
Death in Korean Shamanism	28
Death in Korean Buddhism	30
Death in Korean Neo-Confucianism	33
4. Theology of Death in "The Sunday Service" of John Wesley and in	
Korean American Theology	39
Historical Background of "The Sunday Service of the Methodist in North	
America"	39
Comparison of "The Sunday Service" and the 1662 <i>Book of Common Prayer</i>	41
Theological Understanding of Death in "The Sunday Service" of John Wesley ...	45
Death and Resurrection in Korean American Theology	51
5. Purposes and Functions of Christian Funeral Rituals	56
Purposes of Christian Funeral Rituals	58
Funeral Rituals, Their Functions, and Grieving Process	63

6. Alternative Funeral Rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church	74
Pre-Funeral Rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church	75
Alternative Ritual Elements in the Funeral Service	81
Post-Funeral Rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church	84
7. Proposed Funeral Rites for the American Korean Methodist Churches	90
Funeral Services and Rituals of the United Methodist Church	90
Funeral Services and Rituals of the Korean Methodist Church in Korea	95
Composition of the Funeral Services for the American Korean Methodist Church..	100
Commendation and Commendatory Prayers at the Time of Death	100
A Service for Placing the Dead in the Coffin (<i>Ipkwansik</i>)	103
A Service of Death and Resurrection (The Service of <i>Balin</i>)	105
A Service of Committal (<i>Hakwansik</i>)	110
Distinctions in the Funeral Services for the Korean Methodist Church in the U.S. .	111
8. Conclusion	113
Appendix A	115
Appendix B	116
Appendix C	117
Appendix D	118
Bibliography	119

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Addressed by the Project

This project addresses the need for funeral rites that are culturally relevant and responsive to the pastoral care needs of Korean American Methodist churches in the American Conference of the Korean Methodist Church.

Importance of the Problem

The United States is a multicultural society where diverse worldviews, languages, traditions, lifestyles, and religions coexist. It is no longer uncommon for ministers to be called upon to offer pastoral care in times of loss to those whose faith practices are unfamiliar to them.¹ It is also not uncommon to be called upon to offer pastoral care to a family from a different cultural background at a time of significant loss. Pastors in a multicultural society are called to become multiculturally competent in providing pastoral care.

Funerals are an important pastoral care activity. The funeral is not only a significant chapter in the corporate grief process, it also serves an important role in individuals' processes of grief and mourning.² The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* states that effective pastoral care for bereaved persons is based upon the capacity of the pastor to relate closely to persons undergoing intense emotions; the pastor's knowledge of the dynamics, stages, and behaviors of grief; and the pastor's attention to the needs of the bereaved.³ Likewise, the funeral provides a great comfort and an effective expression of pastoral caring if the pastor can provide care needed, taking into account their cultural backgrounds and religious traditions. This is more

¹ Stuart M. Matlins, *The Perfect Stranger's Guide to Funerals and Grieving Practices* (Woodstock, VT.: Skylight Paths, 2005), 13.

² Gene Fowler, *Caring through the Funeral: A Pastor's Guide* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 132.

³ David K. Switzer, "Grief and Loss," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 474.

difficult when the bereaved are situated in between two cultures and possibly two religious traditions. Thus, an intentional ministry focused on pastoral care for bereaved persons who live between two cultures would be invaluable in churches. In order to provide effective pastoral care for such persons, it is necessary that the pastor consider the unique experiences and contexts, cultural backgrounds, and religious traditions of the bereaved when they prepare funerals for Korean American immigrants.

Funerals have historically varied along with changes of culture and religion in specific regions. Likewise, the form of Christian funerals has changed along with theological understandings of death and resurrection in each denomination. Every denomination embodies its own theological understandings in terms of liturgical formation and contextualization. For Korean Methodists, considering the theological understanding of death and resurrection in “The Sunday Service for the Methodists of North America” created by John Wesley in 1784 and the funeral service with which John Wesley was most familiar, namely, that of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* is important. It is also important to consider Korean American immigrant theologies in order to arrive at culturally relevant funeral rites for American Korean Methodist churches.

Based upon the culturally relevant pastoral practices, many Korean American immigrant churches have attempted to formulate a new form of funeral rites appropriate for Korean American cultures. In 2001, the Korean United Methodist Church (KUMC) and the Presbyterian Church, United States of America (PCUSA) jointly published *Come, Let Us Worship*, a Korean-English hymnal and service book, as a movement of liturgical contextualization.⁴ The KUMC participated in the

⁴ Prof. K. Samuel Lee, the first reader of this project, served on the advisory board of this resource.

development of this book in order to address the growing need for bilingual worship resources for KUMC.⁵ The format of this book uses two printing devices to make possible a bilingual worship service, one that is simultaneously in Korean and English, rather than having languages alternated or translated. This book seeks to be a collection that speaks in the idiom of two different faith traditions – the United Methodist Church (UMC) and the PCUSA. It contains the same hymns but two different sets of liturgical resources. In particular, the Korean-English United Methodist Hymnal contains funeral rites (“A Service of Death and Resurrection” and “A Service of Committal”), while the Korean-English Presbyterian Hymnal and Service Book does not contain funeral rites.

Come, Let Us Worship was intended to be “a resource that would serve as a bridge for some of the differences between first and second generation Korean Americans.”⁶ While this book bridges the language gap between the two generations, it does not provide culturally relevant services. For instance, it mentions that the KUMC liturgical resources have been adopted by the General Conference. Similarly, the PCUSA edition contains the Lord’s Day service.⁷ The funeral rite in the Methodist version accepts and uses Western liturgical traditions and a Western theological perspective without providing any reflection on or of Korean culture and tradition. It is virtually the same as that in the UMC’s *Book of Worship*. As such, it is not responsive to, nor does it touch upon, Korean immigrants’ contextual issues, such as discrimination, oppression, rejection from the dominant American group, and psychological distresses. Secondly, it just contains a “Service of Death and Resurrection” and a “Service of Committal,” but not a “Commendation at the Time of

⁵ United Methodist Church (U.S.), *Come, Let Us Worship: Chansong Gwa Yebae: Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2001), vi.

⁶ United Methodist Church, *Come, Let Us Worship*, vi.

⁷ United Methodist Church, *Come, Let Us Worship*, vi.

Death” or a “Service for Placing the Dead in the Coffin,” which are typical in Korean culture. Third, the funeral rite in *Come, Let Us Worship* tends to portray an understanding of death and resurrection based on current Western theology rather than an understanding of death and resurrection in light of Korean immigrant theology. Because Korean immigrant theology has historically developed in the context of Korean immigrant cultures, languages, and indigenous religions, a theological re-examination of death and resurrection in light of Korean immigrant theology may be helpful in terms of designing culturally relevant funeral rites as well as offering effective pastoral care to the bereaved.

While the KUMC has *Come, Let Us Worship*, its own bilingual service book that includes funeral rites, the American Conference of the KMC does not have its own worship book. That is, it neither has a culturally relevant service book written in Korean or English, nor does it have a bilingual worship book that contains funeral rites. The Korean Methodist churches that affiliate with the American Conference of the KMC have the Korean Methodist *Book of Worship*, but they tend to disregard the funeral rites outlined in it, because they are not sufficiently comprehensive or reflective of Korean American immigrant contexts.⁸ In addition, since many Korean American immigrants are influenced by both American culture and Korean culture, the funeral rites of the Korean Methodist *Book of Worship* do not provide adequate ministerial care. In this context, Korean Methodist pastors, who minister to Korean Methodist churches in the U.S. as members of the American Conference of the KMC, seek culturally relevant ways to prepare funerals for Korean Americans living in a

⁸ I observed three funeral services led by Korean Methodist pastors who work for the Korean Methodist immigrant churches; Valley Hanaro KMC; Great Light KMC; Philadelphia KMC. When I was attending the funeral services, I observed that they were using their own funeral rituals, but not the Korean Methodist *Book of Worship* (*Yemoon*). I had the interviews with three senior Korean Methodist pastors who provided the funeral services in order to ask why they used their own funeral rituals. They stated that the funeral rituals in the *Book of Worship* (*Yemoon*) are culturally not appropriate to Korean immigrant contexts.

multicultural society. A new form of funeral rites should reflect the contemporary context of Korean American immigrants, and this requires an understanding and re-examination of death and resurrection in Korean American immigrant theology.

In this study, I will examine not only the concept of death in Korean cultural and religious traditions, but also the understanding of death and resurrection as reflected in funeral rites that John Wesley used and in Korean American theological literature. Moreover, I will articulate the role of funeral rites in the Korean American immigrant context as a pastoral care method and the first phase of the grief process. I will then propose a model for funeral rites for Korean Methodist churches in the American Conference of the KMC. A new understanding and practice of funeral rites as pastoral care and part of the grief process can help ministers offer effective pastoral care to the bereaved, their friends, and church members in American Korean Methodist churches.

Thesis

My thesis is that most Korean Methodist churches in the U.S. uncritically adopt funeral rites developed for Koreans in Korea or for Methodist in the U.S., and that, in order to provide culturally relevant pastoral care, the KMC in the U.S. must take seriously Korean American immigrants' sociocultural, religious, and historical contexts.

Definitions of Terms

Korean Americans

For the purpose of this project, "Korean Americans" refers to individuals of Korean origin or descent who live in the United States. These individuals participate in and are influenced by both American and Korean cultures. They consist of Korea-born first-generation Korean Americans, and their descendents, referred to as "Next

Generation” by K. Samuel Lee, which includes the Transgeneration (born in Korea but raised in the U.S.), and second- and third-generation Korean Americans.⁹

However, I will focus on first-generation Korean Americans in this project, because the cultural needs of Transgeneration and second-generation Korean Americans are different from those of the first generation.

The American Conference of the KMC

The American Conference of the KMC was formally organized by the KMC in October 2007. The Conference has 307 local churches across the United States.

Grief and Loss

Grief is “the complex interaction of affective, cognitive, physical, and behavioral responses to the loss by any means of a person, place, thing, activity, status, bodily organ, etc., with whom (or which) a person has identified,” i.e., that person or thing has “become a significant part of an individual’s own self.”¹⁰

Bereavement

Bereavement refers to the fact or state of being deprived, due to death, of a family member or other person with whom one has had an enduring tie.¹¹

Han

Han can be defined as a critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression. As an abysmal experience of pain, it is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and it is expressed through such diverse reactions as sadness, frustrated hope, collapsed feelings of pain and helplessness, resentful

⁹ K. Samuel Lee refers to the children of the first generation as the “Next Generation” in “Youngurl Sayonghanun Hanindlul Wihan Mokwhesayuok,” [Ministry for Korean-Americans who use English] *Miju Hanin Kamni Kyohoe paengnyonsa* [The Korean Methodist Church 100 years history], Vol. 2. ed. Chan-Hee Kim (Upland, CA: Committee on Publication of 100-Year History of the Korean-American Methodist Church, 2003), 240.

¹⁰ Switzer, 472.

¹¹ Fowler, 21-22.

bitterness, hatred, and a desire for revenge.¹²

Pastoral Care of the Bereaved

Pastoral care of the bereaved means helping the bereaved allow themselves to feel and to express feelings of grief both verbally and nonverbally. This expression of emotion tends to lead to the most constructive resolution of the grief process, while the repression or suppression of early reactions to loss tends to lead to a greater severity of grief symptoms later. In addition, pastoral care of the bereaved attempts, through frequent conversations, to facilitate grieving, i.e., it helps people express feelings, remember, accept the reality of physical death, experience their own value as individuals, and re-discover meaning in their lives. The funeral is also considered to be a part of pastoral care of the bereaved.¹³

Funeral

A funeral is a worship service or public ritual marking the death of an individual, including the disposition of the dead body by burial or cremation. Usually, a funeral involves a clergyperson, thus a pastoral function by which pastoral care is offered for the bereaved. Funerals are an integral part of the mourning process, assisting individuals in coping with their grief and social groups in reintegrating after the loss of one of their members.¹⁴ The goals of funerals are:

to affirm the reality and finality of the physical death of the person, to encourage remembering and the sharing of memories, to facilitate the identification and expression of feeling, to bind persons to one another in community, to provide conditions and resources which may assist growth in faith and hope, and to celebrate the life of the deceased before God in the context of appropriate religious meanings and ritual expressions.¹⁵

A funeral rite, seen as an “outward rite” or “formal act,” involves putting into practice,

¹² Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 10.

¹³ Switzer, 472-475.

¹⁴ Switzer, 450.

¹⁵ Switzer, 474.

or performing, what a written funeral ritual prescribes.

Work Previously Done in the Field

Only a few resources are available on this topic. Gene Fowler's *Caring through the Funeral: A Pastor's Guide* presents the ministry of funerals from the standpoint of pastoral care. He considers effective caring ministry for the bereaved as he examines the relationship between funerals and the grief process. Fowler defines the vocabulary ministers need in terms of the caring ministry of funerals, including "bereavement," "loss," "grief," and "mourning." He compares four different liturgical books, each associated with a different Protestant denomination. Finally, he moves beyond a discussion of funerals as a form of caring for the bereaved to the interrelationship among funerals, mourning, and grief.

Two other books that deal with funeral rites from religious and cultural perspectives are *The Perfect Stranger's Guide to Funerals and Grieving Practices: A Guide to Etiquette in Other People's Religious Ceremonies*, edited by Stuart M. Matlins, and *Worship Across Cultures: A Handbook*, edited by Kathy Black. Each of these books deals with funeral rites from a broader perspective than the focus considered in this project; each book provides insights into the needs and losses experienced by various ethnic or religious groups and the significance of considering cultural aspects during funerals in terms of pastoral care for the bereaved.

On a practical level, Brandon Cho, a KUMC pastor, advocated for a new form of worship for Korean American immigrants in his D. Min. project, *Toward an Authentic Korean-American Worship*.¹⁶ In his project, he proposed a liturgical model of Holy Communion related to Korean American ancestor worship. The problem addressed by his project is that "Korean-American ministers have a tendency to

¹⁶ Brandon I. Cho, *Towards an Authentic Korean-American Worship*, D. Min. project, Claremont School of Theology, 1987 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1987).

uncritically accept and use Anglo-Saxon liturgy without serious reflection on its purpose, nature and meaning.”¹⁷ Thus, he suggested that “Korean-American churches need to re-examine their liturgy if they want to make their worship services as a dynamic culture-building opportunity, an inspiring spiritual venture, and a meaningful fellowship event.”¹⁸ Cho’s suggestion is that KUMC needs to become actively involved in a movement of liturgical contextualization.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project focuses on funeral rites as a pastoral care resource for Korean Americans who attend a KMC in the American Conference of the KMC. The project will seek to design culturally relevant funeral rites for Korean Americans. It will examine issues related to providing pastoral care to bereaved persons who are influenced by both American and Korean cultures and the role of the pastor in terms of preparing funeral rites.

There are several limitations to this project. First, it does not attempt to consider different funeral rites for persons based on factors such as gender, age, or religious traditions other than Methodism. It will also not take into account different degrees of assimilation into American culture. A second limitation is that the project does not address all the pastoral care needs of Korean American families, but is limited to those needs related to funeral rites. Caring for the bereaved through the entire grief process is a more complex and long-lasting ministry. Therefore, I will examine a definite period of time: from the moment that the pastor is informed of a death to the day of the funeral. A third limitation is that the project focuses on the pastoral care offered by clergypersons and not on the care that may be provided by a congregation or the lay persons in that congregation. Nevertheless, when I discuss

¹⁷ Cho, 126.

¹⁸ Cho, 127-28.

pastoral care as practiced by the minister, some attention will be given to the care provided for and with bereaved church members. While the funeral rite that I will propose assumes that the deceased is an active Methodist, the form can be readily adapted for use in instances where the deceased is not a church member nor perhaps even baptized.

Procedure for Integration

This project will provide practical suggestions for pastoral care with bereaved persons who are Korean American immigrants by designing culturally relevant funeral rites related to the needs of these persons. To do this work, I will conduct a literature review and critical analysis in which attention will be given to the theological, pastoral, liturgical, and cultural aspects of funeral rites conducted in Korean Methodist churches. This will involve engaging the academic disciplines of pastoral care, worship, and cultural studies. I will also analyze funeral rites used by Korean Methodist ministers in the American Conference of the KMC and the role of funeral rites in their ministries. Thus, through these processes, this study will describe and interpret the context of Korean Americans and their cultural and pastoral care needs and expectations with regard to funeral rites.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 describes the project. In this chapter, I analyze the existing resources for funeral rites as pastoral care and point to problems with the resources.

Chapter 2 examines the context for this project by highlighting the current realities and experiences of Korean Americans in the U.S. To examine the contextual issues which will inform the development of culturally relevant funeral rites, I discuss the Korean American immigrant experience, including historical, cultural, religious, and political factors.

Chapter 3 explores the concept of death in Korean cultural and religious traditions, specifically, Korean Shamanism, Korean Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism. These traditions have a major influence on and are important for understanding the historical, cultural, and religious characteristics of funerals in Korea.

Chapter 4 explores the understandings of death and resurrection represented in the funeral resources used by John Wesley. Also, I will examine the biblical and theological understandings of death and resurrection found in Korean American immigrant theology in order to propose culturally and theologically relevant funeral rites for Korean American immigrants in the American Conference of the KMC.

Chapter 5 examines the ministry of funeral rituals from the perspective of pastoral care. For this work, I will explore the purposes and functions of funeral rituals. Also, I will examine the relationship and connection between funeral rituals and the grief process by using academic sources.

Chapter 6 examines alternative approaches to funerals based upon several studies related to the multicultural grieving process and a comparative study between the funeral rituals of North America and Korea. These studies will be the basis for proposing a model of pastoral care through designing culturally relevant funeral rites for Korean Americans in the KMC.

Chapter 7 discusses the funeral services and rituals of the UMC and the funeral services and rituals used by the KMC. Based upon this discussion and the work of previous chapters, I will propose a model for a culturally relevant and integrated funeral service for the KMC in the American Conference of the KMC. Appropriate and integrated funeral rites constitute a valuable method for offering pastoral care to bereaved family and church members who are situated in between Korean and North American cultures.

Finally, Chapter 8 summarizes and concludes this project.

CHAPTER 2

Korean American Immigrants' Contexts

Analyzing and understanding Korean American immigrants' contexts before attempting to design culturally relevant funeral rituals are crucial. In short, the history of Korean American immigrants is a history of hardship. From the first immigration to Hawaii to the present time, Korean Americans have experienced hardships, including labor exploitation, cultural adaptation difficulties resulting from racial discrimination, and interethnic conflicts.¹ Throughout Korean American history, Korean American churches have played a significant role in helping Korean Americans overcome hardships and settle in the U.S. Chapters 2 through 4 review the Korean American experience, including the historical, cultural, religious, and political factors which inform Korean American theology. It will also explore the role of Korean American immigrant churches.

The First Period (1903-1950)²

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Korea experienced many difficult situations, such as starvation due to several famines, invasions from other countries, and internal disturbances. In 1882, Korea signed a treaty of amity and trade (known as the *Chemulpo* Treaty) with the U.S., the first Western country with which Korea established diplomatic ties.³ As early as 1896, the Hawaiian sugar industry attempted to obtain Korean laborers to supply a severe labor shortage on Hawaii sugar

¹ The 1992 Los Angeles Riot is an example of interethnic conflict that Korean American immigrants have experienced in the United States.

² Won Moo Hurh divides the history of Korean immigration to the United States into three distinct phases: (1) the early immigration of predominantly male laborers to the Hawaiian islands (1903-1905), followed by their "picture brides" – Korean women brought to the U.S. by marriages arranged through the exchange of pictures (1910-1924); (2) The post-Korean War immigration (1951-1964) of young Korean women married to American servicemen, Korean war orphans adopted by American families, and a small number of students and professional workers; and (3) the large wave of Korean "family immigration" since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965. Won Moo Hurh, *The Korean Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 31-40.

³ Yong-ho Ch'oe, "The Early Korean Immigration: An Overview," in *From The Land of Hibiscus: Koreans in Hawaii*, ed. Yong-ho Ch'oe (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 11.

plantations.⁴ However, it was not easy to recruit Korean laborers because there were difficulties and strong oppositions within Korea. In 1902, Emperor Kojong was eventually persuaded by Horace N. Allen, the U.S. diplomat to Korea, who was also a Protestant medical missionary, to allow the recruitment of workers for the Hawaii sugar plantations. Emperor Kojong authorized the setting up of an office called *Suminwon* to issue passports to those who wished to travel abroad. After the founding of *Suminwon*, David W. Deshler, an agent of the Hawaii Sugar Planters Association, established the East-West Development Company in Incheon to recruit Korean laborers.⁵

The first group of Korean emigrants left Incheon harbor for Japan aboard a Japanese ship, *Genkai-maru*, on December 22, 1902. After they underwent a physical examination in Japan, they boarded an American merchant ship, the *S.S. Gaelic*, for their voyage to Hawaii.⁶ There are conflicting reports on the exact number of persons in that first group of Koreans. Kim Won-yong, who wrote perhaps the most helpful history of Koreans in the U.S., claims that 121 workers were in the first group of Korean emigrants who traveled to Kobe, Japan on their way to Hawaii.⁷ Although many scholars accepted Kim Won-yong's number, he unfortunately did not give his source for this information. *Hwangsong shinmun*, a contemporary newspaper published in Seoul on December 27, 1902, reported that 54 Koreans left on December 1902 for Hawaii via Japan.⁸ Kato Motohiro, a Japanese consul general stationed at Incheon at the time, wrote a detailed report stating that 97 Koreans left Incheon harbor aboard the *Genkai-maru* to work in Hawaii.⁹ Yong-ho Ch'oe, a professor of

⁴ Hurh, *Korean Americans*, 36.

⁵ Ch'oe, 12.

⁶ Ch'oe, 12.

⁷ Ch'oe, 12.

⁸ Ch'oe, 12.

⁹ Ch'oe, 12.

Korean history at the University of Hawaii, believes that Motoshiro's count is the most accurate, because "as Japan was moving toward gaining dominance over Korea, Japanese officials in Korea were paying meticulous attention to the developments within Korea at the time, scrutinizing every detail of Korea's contacts with foreigners."¹⁰

According to Yong-ho Ch'oe, there is another contradiction between the number of Koreans who departed Incheon on December 22, 1902, allegedly 97, and the 102 who arrived in Honolulu on January 13, 1903. If Motoshiro's number is correct, Yong-ho Ch'oe claims, "a reasonable assumption one can draw is that the first group of ninety-seven emigrants were joined in Japan by other Koreans who had come from other Korean ports at around the same time to undergo physical examinations."¹¹ Thus, 102 Koreans received physical examinations in Japan around the same time and then were allowed to travel to Hawaii. This was the beginning of the first wave of Korean immigration to the U.S. Thereafter, Korean laborers continued to arrive in Hawaii until the end of June 1905. According to a report made by the commissioner general of immigration, a total of 7,400 Koreans entered the U.S. from 1903 to 1905, and of these, 7,291, or 98.5 percent, had reached Hawaiian shores on 65 different ships.¹² Although their intention was to leave the socioeconomic and political hardships in Korea, in Hawaii they suffered from poor living conditions, almost comparable to those of slavery. The prevailing wages during this period were an average of sixty-five cents for a man and fifty cents for a woman for ten hours of work per day. Korean laborers worked an average of sixty hours per week on the

¹⁰ Ch'oe, 13.

¹¹ Ch'oe, 13.

¹² Ch'oe, 17-18.

plantations.¹³ The living conditions on the plantations were not only deplorable, but the laborers had to perform extremely hard work under a hot sun for long hours. Often, they would repay their passage loans and leave Hawaii for the mainland to work on railroads and farms.¹⁴

Between 1910 and 1924, another group of Koreans left for the U.S. They were known as “picture brides,” who, through the exchange of pictures, were brought to the U.S. in order to marry the first wave of Korean bachelors. Most male workers, who immigrated to Hawaii at a young age, remained bachelors for a long time due to the lack of Korean women.¹⁵ They sent pictures back to Korea in the hopes of finding brides. Tragicomic situations were common due to mutual misunderstandings to intentional disguises of age and other personal information because these men and women met only based on photographs. When some of these women arrived in the U.S., they were surprised and deceived because their potential “old” husbands misrepresented themselves with photographs from their young adult years. Some brides had to marry husbands, ten to twenty-five years senior than they. Sadly, they could not return to their homes because their culture would have viewed them as a disgrace. The realities of immigrant life were quite different from what the picture brides anticipated. Korean women not only cooked, washed, and cleaned for their family members, but they also worked on the Hawaii plantations and on the farms of the Western United States. They suffered doubly from demanding housekeeping and the hardships of work on plantations and farms.¹⁶

¹³ Ch’oe, 23.

¹⁴ Hurh, *Korean Americans*, 38.

¹⁵ According to the report by the commissioner of labor statistics on Hawaii, from July 1, 1900 to June 31, 1915, 8,047 Koreans arrived in Hawaii, and they were listed as 6,773 males (84.2 percent), 780 females (9.7 percent), and 494 children (6.1 percent). This report offers a gender breakdown of those Koreans who were admitted into Honolulu harbor. Ch’oe, “The Early Korean Immigration: An Overview,” 18.

¹⁶ Ilpyong J. Kim, “A Century of Korean Immigration to the United States: 1903-2003,” in *Korean*

From 1910-1945, Korea was a colony of Japan. Many students and political refugees left Korea during this time because of persecution from the Japanese government. Hurh and Kim state that “289 Korean students arrived [in the U.S.] with Japanese passports between 1921 and 1940. Some of the students returned to Korea after the completion of their studies, but some remained.”¹⁷ The economic situation of the early Korean students was dire. They had to work to pay for their tuitions and to support their family members. They could only work as gardeners, bus boys, waiters, dishwashers, porters, and orchard or factory workers during school vacations.¹⁸

During this period, Korean American churches attained rapid growth in the number of Koreans professing Christianity as their religion. According to Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson, approximately 2,800 Koreans were converted to Christianity and 39 churches were established in the Hawaiian Islands during the period between 1903 and 1918.¹⁹ Kim and Patterson assert that there are several reasons for this rapid growth of Korean American churches: churches were the only social groups that enabled Koreans to engage in social intercourse with other Koreans; churches provided them an opportunity to maintain their culture and language; and Korean American churches supported political movements for Korea’s independence.²⁰ First, Korean American churches performed a joint ministry of religious and social welfare, providing a spiritual home for poor, lonely, and illiterate plantation workers. After Sunday services, immigrants gathered to speak their native

Americans: Past, Present, and Future, ed. Ilpyong J. Kim (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International, 2004), 14.

¹⁷ Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1984), 49.

¹⁸ Hurh and Kim, 49.

¹⁹ Hyung-chan Kim and Wayne Patterson, *The Koreans in America 1882-1974: A Chronology and Fact Book* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Oceana Publications, 1974), 127.

²⁰ Kim and Patterson, 127.

language, enjoy each other's company, and discuss their problems. These practices reveal that Korean American churches played an active role in supporting Korean immigrants' social and spiritual needs. Second, Korean American churches played a pivotal role in educational efforts to maintain Korean culture and language during this period. For example, most Korean American churches established Korean language schools, Sunday Schools, and night schools. According to Warren Kim, there were 21 Korean language schools throughout the islands of Hawaii between 1907 and 1940.²¹ Wardmann Oden, district superintendent of the Methodist Church, Hawaii Mission, reported on the educational successes of Korean American Methodist churches at the 1914 annual conference: "In 1904 we had 346 students in 6 Sunday schools, but now we have 1,642 students in 39 Sunday schools. And almost every Korean church has night school."²² Third, Korean American churches supported propaganda and diplomatic efforts to restore Korea's independence. They had previously been at the center of the struggle for liberation from the Japanese military government. To gain liberation, churches had not only collected money for the financial support of freedom movements, but they had also nurtured national Korean leaders. Through the integration of these three types of activities, Korean American churches brought comfort to immigrants in the midst of their painful lives and provided them with hope for a better future.

The Second Period (1950-1964)

The second period of immigration was between 1950 and 1964 and involved a more heterogeneous group, consisting of three main categories of people: (1) wives of American servicemen, (2) war orphans, and (3) students. During and after the

²¹ Warren Kim, *Koreans in America* (Seoul, Korea: Po Chin Chai, 1971), 43-44.

²² Tong Shik Ryu, *Hawaii Ei Hanin Gwa Gyo Hwoe: A History of Christ United Methodist Church, 1903-1988* (Seoul, Korea: Christ United Methodist Church, 1988), 89.

Korean War, which lasted from 1950 to 1953, 28,205 Korean women married American servicemen.²³ These women became invisible once they settled in the U.S. with their husbands. In addition, 6,293 war orphans were brought to the U.S. through inter-country adoptions between 1955 and 1966.²⁴ The third category, students, approximately numbered 5,000 immigrants during the four year period from 1950-1953.²⁵ Little data exists about them because they did not create their own groups but integrated themselves quickly into the dominant culture due to their immediate connection with American families.

During this period, Korean churches contributed to the reduction of intergenerational conflicts between first generation Korean Americans and the second or third generations in relation to cultural and political differences. After Korea gained independence in 1945, first generation Korean Americans worked hard for the democratization of Korea, while the democratization of Korea no longer was a critical issue for second or third generation Korean Americans.²⁶ In addition, the second and third generations could hardly identify themselves with the first generation religiously and culturally. Nonetheless, even as Korean American churches provided places of social interaction and cultural identification, they offered opportunities for second and third generation Koreans to understand the first generation's religious perspectives and patriotism.²⁷ Thus, Korean American churches played a bridging role that helped reduce intergenerational conflict between first and later generations. Furthermore, Korean American churches acted not only as representatives of Korean society but also as the backbone of Korean American communities. Because there was not a sufficiently organized Korean association in the U.S., Korean American immigrant

²³ Hurh and Kim, 49.

²⁴ Hurh and Kim, 49-50.

²⁵ Hurh and Kim, 52.

²⁶ Kim and Patterson, 134.

²⁷ Kim and Patterson, 134.

churches provided centers that enabled Korean immigrants to have ethnic solidarity among themselves through worship, fellowship, education, or mutual support.

The Third Period (1965-Present)

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, dramatically changed the quota laws and altered the face of United States immigration up until the present time. In 1989 90% of Koreans in the U.S. consisted of immigrants who arrived after 1965.²⁸ According to Hurh, the number of immigrants increased from 2,139 in 1965 to 33,042 in 1985. In less than 20 years, the number of yearly Korean immigrants increased by almost 11 times, reaching a total of 424,594 during this period.²⁹ According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the population of Korean Americans in the U.S. was 1,415,890 in 2000.³⁰ In 2008, the U.S. Bureau of the Census estimated that the population of Korean Americans was 1,609,980. Moreover, an estimated 607,046 ethnic Koreans in the U.S. were native-born Americans, and 1,002,934 were foreign-born. Korean Americans that were naturalized citizens numbered 533,322, while 469,612 Koreans in the U.S. were not American citizens.³¹

During this third period, Korean immigrants have been motivated to move to the U.S. by their dreams. After the Korean War, the Republic of Korea experienced much suffering due to poverty, political chaos, and an ideological conflict between communism and democracy. From 1961 to 1992, Korea was ruled by a military

²⁸ Won Moo Hurh, "The Korean-American Community: Its Development in Historical and Comparative Perspective," *Modern Praxis* 9 (1989) : 245.

²⁹ Hurh, "Korean-American Community," 243.

³⁰ U.S., Bureau of the Census, *2000 Census of Population, Supplementary Reports, Detailed Ancestry Groups for States* (Washington, DC: Bureau, 2000), CP-S-1-2.

³¹ *2008 American Community Survey*, "S0201 Selected Population Profile in the United States: Korean alone or in any combination," *U.S. Bureau of the Census*, Oct. 26, 2008, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ITTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_S0201&-qr_name=ACS_2008_1YR_G00_S0201PR&-html (accessed December 13, 2009).

government. Economic instability under this government and educational fever in intellectual circles, among other factors, prompted approximately 268,000 Koreans to immigrate to the U.S. in the 1970s and 334,000 in the 1980s, all with the “American Dream” in their minds.³²

One of the major reasons for immigration is the hope of better economic conditions and improved lifestyles. Korean immigrants who have come to the U.S. since 1965 have settled in larger cities, such as New York and Los Angeles. The reason is that they have had a better chance at success by opening small businesses in ethnic communities. These Koreans have moved into cities and neighborhoods where they can afford to start businesses with very little start-up money. Like the Chinese and Japanese, they have created their own communities, known as Koreatowns.³³ Although 72 percent of Korean immigrants held professional or managerial level jobs in Korea, a majority have not been able to find positions in America comparable to their qualifications. They become self-employed and start service-oriented businesses: hamburger stands, barbershops, grocery stores, food services, restaurants, maintenance companies, and so on.

Another reason for immigration is Korean parents’ desire for the best education for their children. In Korea, parents are sometimes overly concerned about their children’s education. Because of this, they will spend enormous amounts of time, money, and energy on supporting and promoting their children’s education. According to statistics, Korean parents who have school-age children generally spend over 20% of their living costs on education. Some Korean parents spend over 40% of their living expenses on their children’s education.³⁴ Because of this educational fever,

³² Hurh, “Korean-American Community,” 246.

³³ Alexandra Bandon, *Korean Americans* (New York: New Discovery Books, 1994), 50.

³⁴ Jung A. Lee, “Sakyoyukbi Jichul Yangkukhwa Simhwa,” [A Serious Discrepancy of Educational

many Korean parents have decided to immigrate to the United States to further the education of their children. Generally, they believe that the U.S. has a good public educational system. They figure that, for little money, they can provide their children with a good education in the U.S. Although Korean parents provide their children with the opportunity to have a good education, they are faced with great, unexpected difficulties between themselves and their transgeneration children. They suffer from a generation gap created by language barriers and different ways of thinking and communicating.

During the third period, Korean churches have become deeply connected to the Korean community. The Korean American church has experienced phenomenal growth, growing to 2,400 churches in only 20 years. By the year 2000, there were about 3,500 Korean churches all across the U.S.³⁵ In addition to their religious functions, Korean churches offer their members many vital services. Some of these are Korean and English language classes, information and training in ways to cope in American society, and a milieu in which to interact with other Koreans. Korean churches function as centers where Korean values and language can be preserved. Counseling, fellowship, mutual aid, economic assistance, and countless other minor services are also supplied by churches and pastors. Thus, Korean immigrant churches and pastors help preserve language, social bonds, and customs central to Korean identity. Furthermore, Korean American churches have been places that offer healing for the marginalized and give them a sense of personal worth and group identity.

Korean American Immigrants' Contextual Issues

Although many Korean American immigrants have safely settled in the U.S.,

Expenses between the High Income Bracket and the Low Income Bracket] *Hankyerae Newspaper*, February 7, 2006, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/ISSUE/16/99206.html> (accessed February: 2007).

³⁵ R. Stephen Warner, "The Korean Immigrant Church as Case and Model," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2001), 39.

due to their own diligence and kindness, they are still faced with unresolved sufferings and difficulties. Korean American immigrants experience harassment, discrimination, humiliation, rejection based on cultural and racial bias, and conflict between Korea-born first-generation Korean Americans and their descendents, the “Next Generation,” which includes the Transgeneration (born in Korea but raised in the U.S.) and second- and third-generation Korean Americans. In addition, they suffer from identity problems, low self-esteem, *han* created by a capitalist global economy, conflicts with patriarchal traditions, and the effects of racial and cultural discrimination.

Korean American immigrants, including the Korean-born first-generation and the following generations, experience many social, racial, and cultural difficulties. Korean Americans are often among the oppressed, the powerless, and the rejected. Nak-In Kim, in his D.Min. Project, named four basic issues Korean immigrants confront in the U.S.³⁶ These are as follows: (1) Korean immigrants are treated as though they are handicapped, because they cannot speak or understand English very well. Therefore, they are unable to communicate effectively with people in the mainstream of society and do not become fully a part of the culture. (2) Korean immigrants experience alienation from the dominant culture. Even if they can speak or understand English fairly well, they are not fully enculturated into U.S. society. They tend to feel that they are marginal to U.S. culture and experience humiliation and rejection. (3) Korean immigrants experience discrimination and racism. Because they have a different culture and a different skin color, regardless of how long they live in the U.S., they are treated as aliens, not as average citizens. (4) Korean immigrants experience conflicts between the first generation and the transgeneration.

³⁶ Nak-In Kim, *A Model Ministry to Transitional and Second Generation Korean-Americans*, D. Min. project., Claremont School of Theology, 1991 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991), 33-35.

One of the top priorities for Korean immigrants is a better education for their children. However, a great unexpected chasm develops between first and transgeneration children. Since the children are living in the mainstream of U.S. culture through school life, television, and English-speaking friends, they become Americanized very quickly, while the parents still keep their Korean values, culture, and ways of thinking. This situation causes painful conflicts and stresses within immigrant families.

Internally, Korean Americans, including Korean-born first generation and the following generations, suffer from identity crises, low self-esteem, and *han*. As Korean American immigrants seek to adapt to U.S. culture, they are thrown into confusion as to how to define their identities. The acculturation process causes an identity crisis as the dominant American culture and the minority Korean culture come into conflict. Korean Americans tend to adapt in one of four ways. The first way is assimilation: a traditional view of cultural identification says that people who are caught between two cultures tend to move toward identification with the dominant culture. This means that “one’s increasing identification with one culture is presumed to result in his or her decreasing identification with another culture and vice versa.”³⁷ In this approach, people are open to losing their old ties and changing and conforming to a dominant culture. The second way is separation: people value maintaining their culture of origin but do not value contact and participation in the dominant society.³⁸ In this approach, people hold an isolationist attitude toward American culture, while openly maintaining their connection with Korean culture. However, it is difficult to pinpoint and circumscribe Korean American identity, because it is so dynamically in flux today. The third way is marginalization: neither assimilation nor separation is

³⁷ K. Samuel Lee, “Navigating Between Cultures: A New Paradigm for Korean American Cultural Identification,” *Pastoral Psychology* 54, no 4 (2006): 292.

³⁸ George K. Hong, MaryAnna Domokos-Cheng Ham, *Psychotherapy and Counseling with Asian American Clients: A Practical Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 30.

achieved.³⁹ Instead, people feel marginalized or alienated from both Korean culture and mainstream American culture. They may not only feel torn between two worlds but also find it difficult to cope with life in an American community. The fourth way is integration: people embrace both Korean culture and mainstream American culture without rejecting either one.⁴⁰ They become bicultural, that is, they have a strong cultural identification with both cultures, and thus, they can become persons of strength, power, and influence in both societies. “This high cultural identification is correlated with high self-esteem, positive personal adjustment, and greater potential to higher cultural stakes.”⁴¹ However, most Korean Americans are not aware of the benefits of the integration approach and bicultural identification. In the midst of confusions regarding acculturation and identity, Korean Americans are constantly struggling to carve out individual identities for themselves.

Korean Americans’ ambiguous identities lead to the creation of psychological issues, such as low self-esteem, inferiority complexes, and lack of self-confidence. If Korean Americans experience identity confusion, if they are rejected by both Korean culture and U.S. culture, it is possible for them to develop a negative self-image or low self-esteem. Low self-esteem then could be the source of a severe inferiority complex, which could lead to excessive self-consciousness, a defensive mentality, irritability, withdrawal syndrome, and depression. In addition, Korean Americans’ external experiences and psychological distresses create *han*, which can be defined as “the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression.”⁴² It is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and is expressed through such diverse

³⁹ Hong, Domokos-Cheng Ham, 30-31.

⁴⁰ Hong, Domokos-Cheng Ham, 30-38.

⁴¹ K. Samuel Lee, “Navigating Between Cultures,” 295.

⁴² Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

reactions as sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, hatred, and the will to seek revenge.

In sum, Korean American immigrants have suffered from historical, cultural, economic, and political difficulties. Although they have safely settled in the U.S., they are still not only suffering from discrimination, racism, rejection from the dominant group, and harassment, they are also experiencing identity crises, psychological distresses, and *han*. Sorrowfully, transgeneration Korean Americans and women have suffered a double burden in their families, schools, and workplaces. In particular, Korean American women must contend with both societal discrimination and male domination within the immigrant community. As a result of their double burdens, they live with much anguish, pain, sorrow, and *han*.

CHAPTER 3

Concept of Death in Korean Cultural and Religious Traditions

One of the purposes of religion is to help people experience happiness and healthy lives, partly through overcoming fear of death. However, people have a tendency to be indifferent to death and to distance themselves from it. There are many reasons for this. For example, the lengthening of the lifespan due to the progress of medical science; the reality of weapons of mass destruction resulting in people's denial of the possibility of widespread death; the media impact with the images and news of death which numb our senses.¹ Kubler-Ross argues that a result of the denial of death is attachment to material wealth. Thus, people become agitated and feel immense pain when they experience and have to face the death of their loved ones.²

Within each religion's mythical patterns and doctrinal teachings, religions have historically sought answers for questions related to death, such as the immortality of the soul, life after death, and salvation from human sins through a proper understanding of human death. The perspectives of each religion on topics related to human death have influenced not only mortuary and funerary practices but also patterns of beliefs and rituals that shape human lifestyles.³ Therefore, gaining an understanding of cultural and religious perspectives about death may be helpful for restoring religious faith to ethnic groups, and it may help people to have a feeling of awe about human death and God. Further, such understanding can contribute to overcoming fear of death and to providing better care for the bereaved. Thus, if Korean American pastors are familiar with how their traditional religions have conceptualized death, they can provide effective care to the bereaved and help the

¹ Elizabeth. Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Colliers, 1993), 10-11.

² Kubler-Ross, 17.

³ Obayashi Hiroshi, *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1992), 1.

bereaved facilitate loss originating from the death of a loved one.

Korean culture has been historically shaped by many religions. Lim argues that it can be compared to the strata of a volcano.⁴ At the base of a volcano is a core of lava which may erupt at any given time. As the volcano erupts repeatedly, a mountain is formed over time, layer by layer. Likewise, Koreans have continuously created and re-created their own specific beliefs or perspectives about human life and death as one religious tradition has succeeded another in having a dominant impact on the culture. Through their influence, Korean Shamanism, Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism have shaped Koreans' concepts associated with human death as well as their attitudes toward death and life.⁵ Yet, the influences of these three Korean traditional religions coexist unconsciously in the ethos of Korea. Therefore, it may not be possible to grasp how Koreans understand death without consciously exploring the impact of Korean Shamanism, Neo-Confucianism, and Buddhism on Koreans' ways of thinking and feeling. Likewise, it would be difficult to design culturally relevant funeral rituals without an understanding of these ethnical religions and their views of death. This chapter presents understandings of death as found in the traditional Korean forms of Shamanism, Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism.

Death in Korean Shamanism

Shamanism is the ancient religion of tribal communities. It is of particular importance because it has played a significant role in establishing cultures, their ethos, and their fundamental understandings of death. In Korean Shamanism, humanity is understood as a creation of God. Humanity is constituted of flesh and soul. Human

⁴ Hakchoon Lim, *A Proposed Liturgical Model of "Chumorye" for Korean United Methodist Churches in America* D.Min. project, Claremont School of Theology, 1996 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996), 20.

⁵ Kyungjae Kim, "Bulkyowa Kidokkyoue Jukeume Daehan Myungsang," [The Contemplation of Buddhism and Christianity about Death] *Kidokkyo Sasang [Christian Thought]* 37 (1996): 23-24. (Translations of the Korean-language sources in this project are mine.)

flesh is inherited from a person's parents, but the human soul comes from God.⁶

Death means that the soul departs from the human flesh, and it returns to its source, the place where it existed before it united with human flesh. However, the departing and returning of the human soul is different from the concept of metempsychosis in Buddhism.⁷ After the soul departs from its human flesh, it has to be characterized as *Sunryung*, *Oneryung*, or *Saryung*, according to the person's principles and actions in life or how the person died. First, *Sunryung* is the soul of a person who had a good conscience and did good deeds. This soul can go to heaven, where the deity lives. Second, *Saryung* is the soul of a person who lived in this world with a bad conscience and wicked deeds. This soul would go to hell, and it would suffer permanently. Third, *Oneryung* is the soul of a person who died with deep sorrow and grief through an unexpected or traumatic event, such as a car accident, massacre, or abusive experience.⁸ According to Yul Kyu Kim, if one dies without resolving one's problems in this world, one's soul (*Oneryung*) remains and wanders the earth until the matter can be reconciled, thus the need for a shaman.⁹ In Korean Shamanism, a soul, as originating before human flesh, is a permanent being beyond the limitations of time and space and one that returns to the world of deity.¹⁰

In Korean Shamanism, the concept of *han* is very closely linked to death. Historically, Korea has suffered from other countries' armed aggression. Socially, Korean women and children have suffered under the patriarchal familial and social system. The people of lower classes have been oppressed by propertied classes.

⁶ Kumwha Kang, "Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok," [The Understanding of Death represented in Korean Religious Culture] *Sekyeui Shinhak [Theology of World]* 30 (1996): 188.

⁷ Kang, "Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok," 189.

⁸ Yul Kyu Kim, "Musok Shinangkwa Kidokkyo Sinang" [Shamanism and Christianity] *Kidokkyo Sasang [Christian Thought]* 361 (1988): 14-21.

⁹ Kim, "Musok Shinangkwa Kidokkyo Sinang," 21.

¹⁰ Kang, "Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok," 190.

Within the Korean social structure, as in any other social structure, many persons died *han*-ridden, and Koreans believed that the dead were not at peace even in death, “death with *han*.” Specifically, *han* is the result of being blocked and stressed for an extended period of time by external oppression and exploitation. It can be characterized as frustrated hope, a collapsed feeling of pain, letting go, resentful bitterness, and a wounded heart.¹¹ In Korean Shamanism, if one dies without resolving one’s *han*, one’s soul remains as a wanderer in this world. In order to resolve *han*, shamans perform a religious ceremony called “*gut*,” appeasing the dead person’s *han* and helping the bereaved return to ordinary and normal life. In *gut*, shamans reconcile and make peace between the dead and the bereaved, and they console the dead person’s soul and the bereaved through exorcism or summoning of the dead’s soul. Thus, the Korean shaman helps the dead and the bereaved resolve their *han* through the religious ceremony of *gut*. Likewise, Korean pastoral care can be instrumental in helping the bereaved resolve *han*, thus the importance of funeral rituals.

Death in Korean Buddhism

Buddhist thought is more oriented toward self-discipline. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is not only to attain enlightenment (nirvana) at the individual level but also to save living beings at the social level.¹² For Buddhism, actions conditioned by a defiled mind full of greed, hatred, and delusion produce human suffering and karma, resulting in repeated rebirths in unsatisfactory forms.¹³ By understanding that all aspects of life are impermanent, and by conditioning the mind with the disciplines of

¹¹ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, 15.

¹² Ken Truitner and Nga Truitner, “Death and Dying in Buddhism,” in *Ethnic Variations in Dying, Death, and Grief*, ed. Donald P. Irish, Kathleen F. Lundquist, and Vivian Jenkins Nelson (Washington, DC: Taylor & Francis, 1993), 128.

¹³ Truitner and Truitner, 126-127.

the Eightfold path,¹⁴ it is possible for the diligent person to escape from the continuing cycle of rebirths and to attain enlightenment (nirvana).¹⁵

Buddhism was officially introduced to Korea during the Three Kingdoms period (350-668 C.E.). Although Confucianism was introduced to Korea before Buddhism, Buddhism significantly influenced Korea from the period of the Three Kingdoms to the early Choson Dynasty, shaping moral, political, and social systems. Wonhyo, a Buddhist monk who primarily introduced Buddhism to Silla, embodied the particular characteristics of Korean Buddhist thought. He attempted to create a practical Buddhism that was oriented toward the common people. According to Wonhyo, all phenomena are merely products of the mind. For him, all doctrinal disputes would become meaningless if one could merely awaken to the fact that all phenomena are products of the mind.¹⁶ For this reason, Wonhyo thought that “doctrine and dispute were less important than the ideal of practice contained within them.”¹⁷ Therefore, Wonhyo emphasized the harmonization of disputes, which means that one could only approach truth by stopping conflict. He stressed an intellectual attitude that sought to bring about harmony among various conflicts and disputes. Influenced by Wonhyo’s thought, early Korean monks believed that the traditions received from foreign countries were internally inconsistent. Buddhist thinkers embraced not only indigenous shamanism and folk religion, but they also created their own form of Buddhism. Korean Buddhism, as a distinct form of Buddhism, gradually permeated the minds and hearts of the common people.

¹⁴ The Eightfold Path consists of right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood (vocation), right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Truitner and Truitner, 127.

¹⁵ Nirvana is not viewed as a heaven, but as an unconditioned state beyond the world of suffering, sometimes called the “other shore.” Truitner and Truitner, 127.

¹⁶ AsianInfo.org, “Buddhism in Korea,” April 8, 2000, <http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/rel/buddhism.htm> (accessed October 28, 2009), 1. Information provided by the Korean Embassy.

¹⁷ AsianInfo.org, “Buddhism in Korea,” 1.

Korean Buddhism focuses on the nature of death, while Korean Shamanism focuses on the immortality of the soul. Korean Buddhism denies death itself (the existence of death) because it understands death to be an integral part of human life experiences, rather than an opposing concept to life.¹⁸ In other words, there is no life without death, but there is also no death without life. In Korean Buddhism, death can be understood as a part of the cycle of life and death, meaning that the body comes from nature and returns to nature.¹⁹ The existence of human beings is as beings who not only become conscious of their selves but also have an ability to restore human nature. A human being is not a soul that has been lent a body from nature, nor is it a composite of three separate parts (mind, soul, and body). Buddhism believes that coming to consciousness of one's self and restoring one's human nature is "emancipation from worldly attachment," deliverance from worldly existence.²⁰ From this perspective, Buddhism believes that people overcome their fear of death through this process of gaining consciousness of their selves and restoring human nature.

Korean Buddhists agree with the Shamanistic view that the human being is not distinguished from animals by the possession of an immortal soul. Also, as in the traditional Christian view, Korean Buddhism holds that people will be rewarded or punished after death according to their actions and beliefs in this life. Traditional Buddhist thought supports this syncretic approach of Korean Buddhism to its understanding of the human soul. According to Saddhatissa, the neutralization of all aspects of human existence is the way to attain nirvana.²¹ By attaining neutralization, such as the subduing of pride, the removal of thirst, the uprooting of desire,

¹⁸ Kyungjae Kim, "Bulkyowa Kidokkyoue Jukeume Daehan Myungsang," 30.

¹⁹ Kim, "Bulkyowa Kidokkyoue Jukeume Daehan Myungsang," 30.

²⁰ Kim, "Bulkyowa Kidokkyoue Jukeume Daehan Myungsang," 31.

²¹ H. Saddhatissa, *Buddhist Ethics: Essence of Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), 168.

dispassionateness, and cessation (nirvana), Buddhists are able to attain Buddhahood and perfection.²² Walshe asserts that “viewed from the extreme left, any middle position looks much further to the right than it is, and vice versa, even though holding two propositions looks like a contradiction.”²³ Under the influence of Buddhism’s idea of neutralization, Korean Buddhists have been able to have a broad-minded and inclusive attitude toward other thought systems or religious perspectives. Thus, Korean Buddhists have historically absorbed not only the Shaman view that all animals, including human beings, have an immortal soul, but it has also accepted the Shaman belief that people are rewarded or punished after death according to their actions and beliefs in this life. Similarly, the concept of transmigration of the soul (metempsychosis) is an example of neutralization between two views in Buddhism. Metempsychosis, in Buddhism, means that a person who continuously performed good deeds in life can be born again after death as another human being, but a person who persisted in doing bad deeds will be born again as an animal or insect.²⁴

Korean Buddhism rejects the concept of annihilationism, but it partly agrees with the concept of eternal life after death contrast to the idea of transmigration in traditional Buddhism. Belief in life after death helps persons overcome their fear of death. In addition, Korean Buddhism overcomes fear of death through holding that the ultimate goal for humans is to be delivered from worldly attachment and existence by gaining consciousness of one’s self and restoration of human nature.

Death in Korean Neo-Confucianism

The ultimate goal of Confucianism is to cultivate a moral sense and to seek

²² Saddhatissa, 168.

²³ M. O’C. Walshe, “Buddhism and Death,” Access to Insight <http://www.accesstosight.org/lib/authors/walshe/wheel261.html> (accessed October 27, 2009), 2.

²⁴ Walshe, 3.

after truth by practicing morality and performing ethical acts.²⁵ The main thematic assertion of Confucianism is that humans can creatively self-transform to become superior human beings and sages through cultivation of the mind and self-development, which are achieved through two moral practices: *jen* (humaneness, 仁) and *li* (ritual, 禮). These two practices need to be complemented with *jeong* (sincerity, 誠).²⁶ With regard to its understanding of humanity, Confucianism stresses that humans beings can accomplish self-development and harmonious relationships with others by practicing and cultivating morality.²⁷ Confucius (552-479 B.C.E.) held to a concept of anthropocentrism and had confidence that humans were able to achieve human perfection.²⁸ For Confucius, humans can be justified by their own efforts, such as good deeds, cultivation of morality, and education. Mencius (371-289 B.C.E.), who derived his thought from Confucius, had more idealistic beliefs about human nature than Confucius. He idealistically believed that human nature is originally good, while Confucius no more than implied that human nature is good.²⁹ Based on his idealistic understanding of human nature, every individual is “complete in himself”; every individual can become a sage; and every individual is equal to everyone else.³⁰ Mencius refined and internalized Confucian teachings by emphasizing “the inner ability of the mind to do good by cultivating the original seeds of the beginnings of four virtues: humaneness (仁), righteousness (義), propriety or ritual (禮), and

²⁵ Kang, “Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok,” 169.

²⁶ Tu Wei-Ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1979), 61-62.

²⁷ Kang, “Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok,” 171.

²⁸ Anthropocentrism is the belief that humans must be considered at the center of, and above any other aspect of, reality. This concept is sometimes known as humanocentrism or human supremacy. Wing-Tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 15.

²⁹ Chan, 49-50.

³⁰ Chan, 50.

wisdom (智).”³¹ The teaching of *jen* (仁) and *li* (禮) and Confucius’s philosophy have spread widely to profoundly influence China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.

Although Confucianism was introduced to Korea before Buddhism, its ideological flowering occurred later through the introduction of Neo-Confucianism during the late-Koryo and early-Choson periods. Neo-Confucianism is a form of Confucianism that was primarily developed during the Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.), and it also became compatible with Buddhist and Taoist teachings. When Neo-Confucianism began, many Neo-Confucianists strongly opposed Buddhism and Taoism. For example, Chou Tun-I (1017-1073 C. E.), the pioneer of Neo-Confucianism, strongly rejected the Buddhist concept of annihilation and the Taoist idea of non-being. However, the followers of Neo-Confucianism began to embrace the philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism, because Neo-Confucianism believed that the way to heaven is to harmonize between the earth and heaven, between the individual and others, and between humanity and nature.³² Also, they believed that the universal is one, but its manifestations are many.³³ Under the influence of these concepts, Neo-Confucianism considered worthy of admiration various ideas emphasized by Buddhism and Taoism, including the nature of the soul, the relation of the individual to the cosmos, and the relation between the individual and others.³⁴ In its incorporation with Buddhism and Taoism, Neo-Confucianism began to focus on ideas such as filial piety, the veneration of ancestors, and fatalism. As one example, the book, *Family Rituals*,³⁵ shows that Neo-Confucianism focused on providing

³¹ Chan, 49-55.

³² Chan, 601.

³³ Chan, 500-01.

³⁴ Chan, 588-91.

³⁵ The book “Family Rituals” was written by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), one of the most important exponents of Neo-Confucianism, who was a rather prolific writer, maintaining and defending his Confucian beliefs of social harmony and proper personal conduct. The book “Family Rituals” provided detailed advice on how to conduct weddings, funerals, family ceremonies, and the veneration of

detailed advice on how to conduct weddings, funerals, family ceremonies, and the veneration of ancestors. Korea, which had long been influenced by China, accepted the ideas of Neo-Confucianism during the late Koryo and early Choson periods. During that time, the ideas of Neo-Confucianism influenced Korean educational, moral, and political systems.

With regard to its understanding of death, Neo-Confucianism upholds the theory of “waiting for destiny.”³⁶ According to this theory, humans should not only endeavor to do their utmost in moral efforts, but they should also leave whatever is beyond their control to fate.³⁷ Neo-Confucianism emphasizes that death is an extinguishment of human energy rather than a separation between human flesh and soul. Death is not the end of human life, but a new beginning, because Neo-Confucianism believes that the minds and souls of ancestors are handed down to their descendants, even though the minds and souls of people disperse after their deaths. In the thought of Neo-Confucianism, there is no concept of life after death, such as heaven, purgatory, or hell; however, it holds that the minds and souls of ancestors connect with their descendants in this world.³⁸ In Neo-Confucianism, death is not just a nihilistic event, it is a time in which people confirm their own identity as beings who have imperishable souls.³⁹ Because of the immortality of the soul and the continuance of connection between the dead and the bereaved, it is very important for children to show their parents respectful attention and filial piety,⁴⁰ whether the parents are alive or dead. In particular, Neo-Confucianism emphasizes that people should show their ancestors’ souls filial piety by frequently performing ancestor

ancestors.

³⁶ Chan, 613-14.

³⁷ Chan, 614.

³⁸ Kang, “Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok,” 172

³⁹ Kang, “Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok,” 175.

⁴⁰ Neo-Confucianism believes that filial piety(孝) is one of the roots of humanity, with the other being brotherly love. Chan, *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 668-676.

worship ceremonies, because they believe that the souls of ancestors protect their descendents from disasters or calamities. Because of ancestor worship, Neo-Confucianism can be considered a religion, even though it focuses on self-transformation through ethical and moral practices.

Neo-Confucianism stresses reconciliation between death and life through performing *Sangrye* (funeral rites for the dead)⁴¹ and *Cherye* (a memorial service for the repose of one's ancestors).⁴² While Christianity overcomes fear of death through belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the salvation of God for human beings, Neo-Confucianism overcomes fear of death through affirming a continuance of presence and connection between the dead and the bereaved by performing *Sangrye* and *Cherye*.⁴³ If fear of death comes from a severance of relationship or connection between the dead and the bereaved, *Sangrye* and *Cherye* play a significant role in weakening fear of death by providing assurance that there is a continuation of relationship between dead persons and their living descendents.⁴⁴ During the past two centuries, the practice of *Sangrye* and *Cherye*, as acts of ancestor veneration, has become a controversial issue not only in Korean churches but also in the larger Korean society. This is because Protestant missionaries strictly rejected *Sangrye* and *Cherye*, considering them to be shamanistic acts of idolatry. However, the expression

⁴¹ *Sangrye*, usually performed on the third through seventh days, are funeral rites. During the period of *Sangrye*, the oldest son of the bereaved family separates from everyday life in order to appease and bond with the soul of the dead. After seven days, the oldest son returns to his daily work. Donhee Im, *Juntong Sangrye [Korean Traditional Ancestor Worship]* (Seoul: Daewon Press, 1995), 14.

⁴² *Cherye* is an anniversary memorial service of a person's death based upon the ritual of Korean Confucianism. It is an expression of filial piety to the ancestors and a highly valued social practice in the traditional Korean family system. In spite of its socio-religious origin, *Cherye* has come to be accepted as a common practice of honoring ancestors among Koreans. Im, *Juntong Sangrye [Korean Traditional Ancestor Worship]*, 22.

⁴³ Kang, "Hankuk Jongkyo Munhwa Soke Natanan Jukeumihewha Shinhakjuk Kukbok," 175.

⁴⁴ According to a study which created a "fear of death scale," the fear of death for Korean elderly people is 98 (with 100 representing the most confidence in terms of death), whereas that of American elderly people is 92. This scale represents the degree of intrepidity in the face of death. According to the study, Korean elderly people are less fearful of death than American elderly persons. Im, *Juntong Sangrye [Korean Traditional Ancestor Worship]* 14.

of filial piety or solidarity among family members represented by *Sangrye* and *Cherye* are meaningful in helping to overcome the disintegration of families living in individualistic and egocentric societies.

In summary, three traditional Korean religions -- Shamanism, Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism have continuously influenced the shape of Korean culture in terms of ethos, moral standards, social and political systems, and religious sentiments. In particular, these traditional Korean religions have developed their own concepts in relation to human death through religious interaction and the incorporation of one another's concepts. For example, the absence of an idea of life after death in Neo-Confucianism caused Koreans to turn to the belief in life after death found in Korean Shamanism. Thus, syncretism occurred. Moreover, because they held the concept of neutralization emphasized by Buddhism, Koreans historically absorbed not only the view of Shamanism that all animals (including human beings) have an immortal soul, but they also accepted the belief in rewards and punishments after death according to our actions and beliefs in this life. Although Christianity has become one of the major religions in Korea, the understanding of death created by religious interaction and syncretism among the three traditional Korean religions still remains in the depths of Koreans' consciousness.

CHAPTER 4

Theology of Death in “The Sunday Service” of John Wesley and in Korean American Theology

In the previous chapter, I examined not only how Koreans understand the concepts of death and life after death but also how traditional Korean religions have shaped their own ideas regarding death, the human soul, and life after death. The purpose of this project is to design culturally and theologically relevant funeral rituals for Korean Methodist immigrant churches in the U.S. For this work, just as it is important to explore the understandings of death represented in Korean culture and its traditional religions, it is also essential to examine the theological understandings of death represented in traditional Methodism and Korean American theology. Therefore, this chapter examines the funeral liturgies of the Methodist tradition and explore the understandings of death found in Korean American theology, while at the same time seeking a new form for today’s KMC. A revised ritual, if it is to be a culturally relevant funeral rite, will need to convey the theological meanings of the Methodist tradition and the tradition itself in ways that are helpful theologically and psychologically to Korean Methodist immigrants in their grief.

Historical Background of “The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America”

Methodism as developed by John Wesley is the historical and theological root of the KMC. James White argues that it is clear that “any understanding of what is distinctive in Methodist worship must begin with Wesley’s legacy.”¹ Following White’s argument, attempts to explore a proper Methodist liturgical form for funeral services and to understand the Methodist concept of death must begin with the origins of the Methodist tradition. White argues that “The Sunday Service of the Methodists

¹ James F. White, introduction in John Wesley, *John Wesley’s Prayer Book: The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (Cleveland, OH: OSL Publications, 1991), i.

in North America” created by John Wesley is the core of his bequest and demonstrates Wesley’s theological intentions about worship and rituals.² This means that Wesley’s “Sunday Service” can be a primary resource for understanding Wesley’s theology and primitive American Methodist views regarding death and resurrection, because this Service includes the traditional funeral liturgy, “The Order for the Burial of the Dead.”

On November 3, 1784, when Thomas Coke, Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey arrived in New York, just prior to the landmark Christmas Conference in Baltimore, they brought with them not only their ordination credentials and instructions to ordain Francis Asbury, but also a copy of “The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America.”³ In his preface to that document, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote:

I believe there is no liturgy in the world, either in ancient or modern language, which breathes more of a solid, scriptural, rational piety, than the Common Prayer of the Church of England: And though the main of it was compiled considerably more than two hundred years ago, yet is the language of it not only pure, but strong and elegant in the highest degree.⁴

Little alteration is made in the following edition of it, (which I recommended to our SOCIETY in AMERICA) except in the following instances:

1. Most of the holy-days (so called) are omitted, as at present answering no valuable end.
2. The Service of the Lord’s Day, the length of which has been often complained of, is considerably shortened.
3. Some sentences in the offices of Baptism, and for the Burial of the Dead, are omitted;
4. Many Psalms are left out, and many parts of the others, as being highly improper for the mouths of a Christian Congregation.⁵

This preface reveals that John Wesley understood that social conditions in North America were radically different from those of England, and he recognized the

² White, i.

³ Kenneth B. Bedell, *Worship in the Methodist Tradition* (Nashville: Tidings, 1976), 51.

⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol.14, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 304.

⁵ Wesley, *Works of John Wesley*, 14: 304.

need for modification of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* that was used by British and American Methodists at the time. Wesley seemed to believe that the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* was completely not appropriate for Methodists, particularly American Methodists, of his time. Kenneth Bedell asserts that since American Methodist preachers had been denied the right to administer the sacraments, they had adapted other forms of worship for their work.⁶ As a result of this context, John Wesley created “The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America” in 1784 and sent it to the American Conference.

Significantly for this project, Wesley’s preface shows that he omitted parts of the Church of England’s “Burial of the Dead” liturgy in order to design an appropriate funeral service for American Methodists. In 1792, when the “Sunday Service” was dropped, the burial ritual became part of *The Book of Discipline* and was changed very little for almost one hundred years.⁷ However, since 1784 many official changes have occurred, indicating that the funeral liturgy of the United Methodist Church has been a very important matter. Probably more has been involved than merely the desire to update the service. It is clear that the United Methodist Church has been trying to come to grips with basic theological and liturgical understandings.

Comparison of “The Sunday Service” and the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*

The 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* was the strongest influence upon the “Sunday Service” developed by Wesley. The “Order for the Burial of the Dead” developed by Wesley was included in the “Sunday Service,” which was brought on sheets of paper to America in 1784. It was a shortened version of the burial ritual of the 1662 prayer book. Wesley removed several rubrics from this ritual, but he kept those that he considered important.

⁶ Bedell, 52.

⁷ Bedell, 52-56.

When Wesley sent over “The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America with Other Occasional Services,” dated September 9, 1784, the title of the funeral service was “The Order for the Burial of the Dead.” Harmon mentions that Wesley adopted this title exactly as it was given in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*.⁸ This shows that Wesley had a great deal of respect for the Church of England’s prayer book. In 1804, the title of the burial service was changed to “The Order of the Burial of the Dead.” Since the 1964 publication of the book of worship by the Methodist Publishing House, the title has been “The Order for the Burial of the Dead.”

In “The Order for the Burial of the Dead,” Wesley omitted from the burial rite of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* the first rubric prohibiting the use of the service for any who had died unbaptized or who had been excommunicated or committed suicide: “Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves.”⁹ In addition, Wesley omitted the Committal. It had appeared in the 1662 prayer book, but it did not appear in the Methodist service until 1864. The Committal had been introduced with this rubric: “Then while the earth shall be cast upon the body by some standing by, the Minister shall say, . . .”¹⁰ It continued as follows:

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, in his wise providence, to take out of the world the soul of the departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; at whose second coming in glorious majesty to judge the world, the earth and the sea shall give up their dead; and the corruptible

⁸ Nolan B. Harmon, Jr., *The Rites and Ritual of Episcopal Methodism* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1926), 280.

⁹ Church of England, *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of Sacraments, and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, According to the Use of The Church of England: Together with the Psalter or Psalm of David* (London: University of Cambridge, 1762), 344. This document is intended to exactly reproduce *The 1662 Book of Common Prayer* as printed by John Baskerville in 1762.

¹⁰ Book of Common Prayer, 349.

bodies of those who sleep in him shall be changed and made like unto his own glorious body; according to the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.¹¹

According to Harmon, the Committal is the part of this whole service that has caused the most controversy. For example, the words, “forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God to take unto himself . . . ,” displeased the Puritans, because they “seemed to make God the author of death, and implied that every person was thus taken unto God.”¹² Also, “the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life” appeared to the Puritans to imply that every person who was laid to rest could have that hope.¹³ Perhaps because of giving into the pressure of Puritan influences, Wesley omitted this entire committal. Thus, the prayer beginning, “Almighty God,” was also removed by him:

Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that DEPART HENCE in THE LORD, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity: We give thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; ...¹⁴

Wesley omitted this prayer because it sounded “harsh to thank God for the death of those we bury, and it implies that they are happy, which may or may not be the case.”¹⁵ Other omissions tended to be of preliminary rubrics, such as, “The Minister meeting the Corps and going before it, shall say, . . .”¹⁶ Also, Wesley omitted Psalm 39, but he retained Psalm 90 and concluded with the Gloria Patri. In 1792, Psalm 90 and the Gloria Patri were removed by Wesley’s successors.

With regard to the rubrics preserved by Wesley in “The Order for the Burial of the Dead,” he kept “processional anthems” in the “Sunday Service.” What today are

¹¹ Book of Common Prayer, 349.

¹² Harmon, 303.

¹³ Harmon, 303-04.

¹⁴ Book of Common Prayer, 350.

¹⁵ Harmon, 305.

¹⁶ Harmon, 280.

called “opening sentences” were originally called “processional anthems,” because the original order called for them to be sung or said by “The Priest and Clerks.” Thus, Wesley adopted word for word the opening sentences from the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*. The first processional anthem is John 11:25-26: “Jesus said . . . ‘I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.’” The second one is Job 19:25-27: “. . . I know that my redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then without my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.” The third and fourth sentences are a combination of I Timothy 6:7 and Job 1:21: “. . . We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain that we cannot take anything out of the world. ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’”¹⁷ For 132 years, these three anthems opened Methodist funeral services.¹⁸

Wesley carried over from the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* the same rubric for the Lesson: “Then shall follow the Lesson taken out of the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians – the resurrection chapter.”¹⁹ The reading began at verse 20 and continued to the end of the chapter at verse 58. In the 1549 and 1552 *Book of Common Prayer*, the lesson was read after the committal, but in 1662, it followed it, along with selections from the Psalms. However, in 1792, the Methodists deleted the passages from both Corinthians and the Psalms.²⁰ Wesley also replicated the inclusion of Revelation 14:13 in his funeral rite. All services from 1784 to the most recent contain Revelation 14:13. Until 1932, this rubric was mandatory. Since that time it has been optional. In terms of prayers, Wesley adopted the *Kyrie, eleison*

¹⁷ John Wesley, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America: With Other Occasional Services* (London, 1784), 156.

¹⁸ Harmon, 300.

¹⁹ Wesley, *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, 158.

²⁰ Harmon, 301.

(“Lord, have mercy”), which has been retained from 1784 to the present, with the exception of the years 1932 to 1944.²¹ In addition, the collect – “O Merciful God, The father of our Lord . . .” was included by Wesley in his service. It has remained unchanged in every revision since 1784.²² Finally, from Wesley’s service to the present, the final benediction at the grave has been II Corinthians 13:14, with the exception of the service printed in 1964. The rubric, when there has been one, has always been optional.

The basic structure of Wesley’s burial service was as follows:

1. Title
2. Preliminary Rubrics
3. Processional Anthems (John 11:25-26, Job 19:25-27, 1 Tim. 6:7)
4. The Psalms (Psalm 90)
5. Gloria Patri
6. The Lesson (1 Cor. 15:20-58)
7. Anthems or Sentences at the Grave (Revelation 14:13)
8. The Kyrie
9. The Lord’s Prayer
10. The Collect: “O Merciful God, the Father of our Lord...”
11. Benediction (2 Cor. 13:14).²³

Theological Understanding of Death in “The Sunday Service” of John Wesley

Wesley’s service book is a primary source for Methodist theology because of its liturgical witness to faith. With the “Sunday Service,” American Methodists began a tradition of funeral practices that differed from the Church of England’s *Book of Common Prayer*. Although Wesley’s service book was historically not popular in the American Methodist Church, Tucker states that the theology articulated within it created doctrinal standards that undergirded the Methodist approach to dying and death.²⁴ For example, according to White, the Christological focus represented in the “Sunday Service” has continuously influenced not only Methodist theological

²¹ Harmon, 305.

²² Harmon, 306.

²³ Harmon, 298.

²⁴ Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, *American Methodist Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 202.

reflection regarding Christian death and resurrection but it has also contributed to the revision of each funeral service order up until the present time.²⁵

Wesley viewed death as paradoxically both a punishment and a promise. For Wesley, death as a penalty is a temporal death, a spiritual death, and an eternal death originating from the consequences of the lingering sin of Adam's fall, rather than the natural completion of the life process.²⁶ Thus, for the unredeemed, death was a punishment for sin rather than a divinely ordained end. However, Wesley simultaneously believed that "to die is to gain" and death is "the promise of the cure of sin and an entrance into a far more desirable country."²⁷ In other words, those persons who have been redeemed from their sins can be assured that their physical deaths are not the end and that a better existence awaits them.

With regard to the souls of the deceased, John Wesley disagreed with the concept of that souls would exist eternally in separation from the body. Rather, Wesley believed that "souls would enter an intermediate and penultimate state in which they would remain until reunited with the body at the resurrection of the dead."²⁸ For him, the souls of people who had lived as faithful Christians would gain a foretaste of heaven, converse with the saints of all ages, and be "perfected" and "ripened" for the heavenly realm.²⁹ In contrast, the souls of the wicked would enter an intermediate state which was a foretaste of an unavoidable hell. However, Wesley disagreed with the Roman Catholic concept of purgatory. He condemned this doctrine as not having a scriptural foundation and as being "repugnant to the Word of God."³⁰

Wesley's theological perspective concerning the souls of the dead was

²⁵ White, 8-10.

²⁶ Westerfield Tucker, 202.

²⁷ Westerfield Tucker, 202.

²⁸ Westerfield Tucker, 202.

²⁹ Westerfield Tucker, 203.

³⁰ Westerfield Tucker, 203.

different from the concept of the immortality of the soul emphasized in “The Larger Catechism,” which represented the theology of “the Godly,” or “Puritans” in seventeenth-century England. Under the influence of “The Larger Catechism,” these English Protestants in the seventeenth century believed that at death, the soul of the deceased does not experience death, but instead, it ascends to heaven to dwell in the presence of God or to rest in Jesus Christ.³¹ Stroup indicates that this understanding of death persisted in the church for a long time, even though many theologians argued that this understanding has little or no basis in Christian scripture.³² For example, Johan Beker, the author of the book, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought*, demonstrated that the understanding of death in “The Larger Catechism” was not identical with the understanding of the Apostle Paul concerning death and the soul.³³ Rather, Beker found that the understanding of death in “The Larger Catechism” assumed that human beings not only consist of souls and bodies, but that these are separable realities. For Beker, this perspective was part of Hellenistic understanding, especially Platonic thought, and was not the perspective of Paul. In his book on Paul, Beker wrote:

Paul insists on the psychosomatic unity of the person and excludes the idea of an immortal soul or a disembodied spirit in the new age . . . Death, then, is neither the inevitable end of life, which one can contemplate with tranquility (the Stoics; Epicurus), nor the peaceful resting place for individual Christians who, at the moment of death, will enter immortality and eternal life. Death remains – however qualified by Christ’s resurrection – the sign that we live in solidarity with the created order in its finitude and are not yet perfected.³⁴

Wesley appears to have adhered to Paul’s understandings of death and of the resurrection of the dead, i.e., he excludes the idea of a soul eternally separated from

³¹ George W. Stroup, “Death, Resurrection, and the Communion of the Saints,” *Reformed Liturgy & Music* 20:4, Fall (1986) : 189.

³² Stroup, 189.

³³ Stroup, 190.

³⁴ Johan Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), as cited in Stroup, 190.

the body, and he understands that the bodies of faithful Christians will be transformed at the second advent of Christ during the resurrection of the dead. Wesley's use of 1 Corinthians 15:42-45 and 50-52 as the lesson in his burial service demonstrates that he adhered to Paul's theological perspective.³⁵ The use of these verses suggests that Wesley believed that the physical body would be totally changed into a new creation at the time of the eschatological resurrection of the dead. This is in contrast to "The Larger Catechism," which implies that what is raised at the last day is the Christian's dead body. In his sermon, "The Resurrection of the Dead," Wesley confirms this:

But when we have obtained the resurrection unto life, our bodies will be spiritualized, purified, and refined from their earthly grossness; then they will be fit instruments for the soul in all its divine and heavenly employment; we shall not be weary of singing praises to God through infinite ages.³⁶

However, Wesley hints here that the souls that have been existing in an intermediate state since the time of death will be reunited with their bodies, although the bodies may now have a spiritual form. This is a notion that is not found in Paul's writings. So, while Wesley may have affirmed the ultimate, eternal psychosomatic unity of the person (i.e., he believed the soul was reunited with the body at the resurrection of the dead), he does seem to diverge from Paul in separating the soul from the body at death. In this respect, he continues the dualism of body and soul found in "The Larger Catechism," although he preserves the importance of the resurrection of the dead by not asserting that the soul immediately ascends to heaven to commune with God or Christ at the time of death.³⁷ Rather, the soul waits for the body to be made worthy of

³⁵ Wesley, *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, 159.

³⁶ John Wesley, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 7, ed. Thomas Jackson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 483.

³⁷ "The Larger Catechism" emphasizes two resurrections: "When the believer's body dies, his or her soul immediately ascends into communion with Christ, while the body rests in its grave. On 'the last day,' the second resurrection occurs. The bodies of the elect are raised from the grave and reunited with their immortal souls. Given that personhood seems to be more a function of the soul than the body, this second resurrection is at best anticlimactic. The 'real' resurrection seems to be the first, the resurrection of the soul from the body." (Stroup, 191.)

it through a purification and refining process at the last day. In this way, Wesley remains loyal to Paul's understanding that there was only one resurrection of the dead, and this resurrection would take place at the "last day," when Christ would return to deliver the kingdom of God the Father by destroying every ruler, power, and authority.³⁸

With regard to the after-life, Wesley believed that resurrection to eternal life was not guaranteed to all humanity, but only to faithful Christians and saints in Jesus Christ. For Wesley, the general resurrection of the dead would be followed by the Day of Judgment.³⁹ Thus, he was very cautious about presuming that all who died would be resurrected to eternal life.⁴⁰ His theological intentions are evident in the omissions and revisions he made to the *Book of Common Prayer* as he created his "Sunday Service." Wesley omitted phrases from the Collect, all the prayers of the Committal, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving because he was concerned, due to the influence of Puritans, that "they were too confident in naming the eternal destiny of every individual who might receive the last rite."⁴¹ Wesley objected to the assumption that all who died departed "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," as stated in the Committal. Similarly, Wesley omitted the Prayer of Thanksgiving: "We give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world."⁴² Wesley understood that the Prayer of Thanksgiving in the burial office makes the assumption that every individual who might receive the last rite is certain to be resurrected to eternal life. Thus, Wesley's objection to the Committal and the Prayer of Thanksgiving suggest that he believed

³⁸ Stroup, 191.

³⁹ Westerfield Tucker, 203.

⁴⁰ Westerfield Tucker, 204.

⁴¹ Westerfield Tucker, 204.

⁴² John Wesley, "Ought We to Separate from the Church of England?" in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design*, ed. Rupert E. Davies (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), 572.

that resurrection to eternal life was guaranteed only to faithful Christians and saints in Christ, not to all humanity. But, since there was this guarantee for the faithful, the response of faithful dying persons and their bereaved ought to be hope and joy rather than lamentation and sorrow, because the death of a faithful Christian meant they would enter everlasting habitations. Therefore, Wesley preferred that Christians “meet the death of loved ones and their own deaths with an acceptance of the mercy and grace of God.”⁴³ Nonetheless, the death of unfaithful persons may be a source of despair to those who care about them, so funerals ought to at least be occasions for remembering the deceased and for returning the body to the earth.

In his service book, Wesley tried to focus on proclaiming the Christian faith, giving emphasis to the Holy Scriptures and the proclamation that Jesus Christ is the Lord of life and death. According to White, the Methodist tradition as created by Wesley did not articulate a theology for eulogies or a methodology for doing them. Rather, what the burial service has sought to do is share the Christian faith, and, in particular, to emphasize that Christ has power over both life and death.⁴⁴ For example, this proclamation has been present in the Methodist burial service from the very beginning in the form of the final collect:

“O merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die, and whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall not die eternally . . .”⁴⁵

This final collect adopted by Wesley clearly affirms that Jesus Christ is the Lord of death and life and that faithful Christians will be resurrected. The focus of Wesley’s service book is strongly Christological and biblical in terms of its understandings of death and resurrection.

⁴³ Westerfield Tucker, 204.

⁴⁴ White, in John Wesley’s Prayer Book, 26.

⁴⁵ Wesley, *Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, 161.

In sum, Wesley's theological understandings of death and resurrection as revealed in "The Sunday Service" were grounded in the viewpoint of the Apostle Paul. In other words, Wesley's theological perspective was more biblical and evangelical than the theological understanding of "The Larger Catechism" that prevailed during the seventeenth century. Although Wesley was intimately familiar with the Anglican Church because of his religious and ministerial backgrounds, he revealed that he was loyal to Paul's perspective through his selective editing of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer's* burial service. This understanding is very important for both American Methodists and Korean Methodists because Wesley's theological perspective is the root of our religious faith. His theological view needs to be preserved in today's Methodist churches in order to maintain our identity as Methodists.

Death and Resurrection in Korean American Theology

The term, "theology," referred to "Western theology" for a long time. Traditional Western theology tended not to pay attention to the contexts of non-Europeans, especially Eastern countries. In the past several decades, Asian, Latin American, and feminist theologians have made the criticism that "traditional Western theology, with its emphasis on individual salvation and morality, was often disruptive of non-Western cultures, focusing only on the individual with little recognition of community or social context."⁴⁶ On the basis of this criticism, they have formulated more appropriate theologies that fit their specific contexts and experiences. Korean American theologians have also attempted to develop theologies that value their particular voices and culture. In particular, they have sought for acceptable and appropriate images of Jesus and God which urge Korean American immigrants to be positive and active beings, having liberation, self-determination, and inclusion of

⁴⁶ Ji-Sun Kim, *The Grace of Sophia: A Korean North American Women's Christology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002), 12.

different ways of thinking and living as their goals. Through an exploration of the works of Korean American theologians, I will seek to gain an understanding of death and resurrection that will be appropriate for Korean American Christians.

First, in Korean American theology, death is an event which gives rise to hope and comfort for Korean American Christians, rather than being considered a penalty for human sin. The Christology of “marginal theology,” one Korean American type of theology, makes this perspective particularly clear. For marginal theology, the life of Jesus was a life of marginality. Jesus was born a marginalized child in a context of poverty: he was born to an unmarried mother in a stable. When he grew up, Jesus became a friend of marginalized people. He spent time with outcasts, tax collectors, Gentiles, women, the poor, and the oppressed. Because of his association with marginalized people, the dominant groups of Jesus’ time period did not accept him, but the marginalized people accepted him as one of their own. In addition, Jesus was rejected not only by dominant groups, but by his own disciples when he was condemned and was dying on the cross. Jesus became totally an outsider and a marginal person in between two worlds.

According to Jung Young Lee, Jesus Christ was symbolically situated in between worlds, belonging neither to heaven nor to earth, just as Korean Americans live between the worlds of two very different cultures.⁴⁷ Jesus, when he was on earth, no longer belonged to heaven because he had left there, and he did not belong to the world because through baptism he renounced sinful ways.⁴⁸ Jesus Christ represents all marginal people, rather than the people in the centers of societies around the world. Lee argues that Jesus’ ministry and life in association with marginal people helps

⁴⁷ Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 83-85.

⁴⁸ Lee, *Marginality*, 85.

these people find the abilities to overcome their marginality, to love others, and to feel comfort and peace.⁴⁹ Likewise, Lee emphasizes that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as an experience of marginality, gives marginal people comfort and determination to continue in their lives despite their marginality, because the empty cross not only represents triumph, joy, and hope, it also reminds marginal people that “they can have an empty space to live authentically without dominion from the central group” and fill that empty space with what they desire.⁵⁰ Lee argues that the resurrection of Jesus symbolizes hope, joy, and renewal of life because Jesus Christ transcended all marginality with his resurrection.⁵¹ In marginal theology, Jesus overcame the bondage of every cultural, racial, religious, sexual, economic, social, or regional bias with his resurrection.⁵² Thus, as marginalized persons who follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, Korean American Christians should look to this powerful memory of crucifixion and resurrection as a sign of hope and comfort when they have lost a loved one. In addition, if the death and resurrection of Jesus means the overcoming of his marginal situation and represents triumph and hope, then the deaths of Korean American Christians, as followers of Jesus, means participation in this triumph and joy and the overcoming of their marginal situations.

Second, death is not only an event through which a Christian is liberated from all suffering and *han*, but also an opportunity to experience God’s love. In terms of the theology of *han*, the death of Jesus on the cross is “not only the expression of God’s love for humanity, but also the protest and wrath of God against oppressors.”⁵³ According to Andrew Sung Park, the crucifixion event shows that God participates in

⁴⁹ Lee, *Marginality*, 89-90.

⁵⁰ Lee, *Marginality*, 96.

⁵¹ Lee, *Marginality*, 95.

⁵² Lee, *Marginality*, 95.

⁵³ Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 124.

the suffering of the oppressed and the rejected.⁵⁴ Through the death of Jesus, divine involvement in human suffering means the beginning of the healing of all marginalized people.⁵⁵ For Park, the death of Jesus on the cross is an expression of God's *han* as well as an expression of God's love. Wonhee Anne Joh agrees with Park's perspective, but she argues that by focusing on the image of the cross as representing *han*, Korean theologians overlook another image also embodied on the cross.⁵⁶ For Joh, the cross is "double-edged."⁵⁷ It has two imagistic representations: *han* and *jeong*. While *han* is "the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression,"⁵⁸ *jeong* is composed of vulnerability, slight hatred, and brokenheartedness; in other words, *jeong* is composed of both loving and hateful mindsets. Thus, *han* is inevitably interwoven with the presence of *jeong*.⁵⁹ According to Joh, the death of Jesus on the cross is a disclosive event embodying not only suffering, in the image of *han*, but also a radical form of inclusive love in the image of *jeong*.⁶⁰ As Park mentions in his theology of *han*, the event of the crucifixion is an expression of God's love for humanity, even though the cross represents the protest and wrath of God against oppressors and an unjust world.⁶¹ If the ultimate life of a Christian means not only to participate in the crucifixion and resurrection events but also to take part in the project of salvation, then the deaths of Christians can be simultaneously opportunities to feel God's love (as found in the image of *jeong*) and

⁵⁴ Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 124.

⁵⁵ Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 124.

⁵⁶ Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xxiii.

⁵⁷ Joh draws upon Jung Ha Kim's theological perspective, which is the so-called "double edged . . . symbol of the cross." For Jung Ha Kim, this means that the cross, as a "double-edged" image, works both to pay homage to patriarchal notions of power and obedience and to "menace" those concepts at the same time. [cite Joh]

⁵⁸ Park, *Wounded Heart of God*, 10.

⁵⁹ Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 22.

⁶⁰ Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, xxi.

⁶¹ Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 91.

to experience liberation from *han* and human suffering.

This theological perspective can be meaningful to Korean American Christian mourners in terms of grieving their loss and their healing processes, because the images of *han* and *jeong* are Korean cultural sentiments that have permeated Korean consciousness for a long time. These images have influenced Koreans in terms of shaping Koreans' ethos, ways of thinking, and lifestyles. Also, these emotional images have played a significant role in helping Koreans overcome their sufferings and heal from their deep sorrows and uniquely mixed feelings of sorrow and regret. As specifically Korean sentiments that play a significant role in Koreans' healing processes, the images of *han* and *jeong* represented in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross can offer consolation and comfort to Korean American Christian mourners. Therefore, funeral rituals focusing on the images of liberation from suffering (as found in the image of *han*) and God's love (as found in the image of *jeong*) may play a significant role in helping Korean American Christian mourners feel consolation and grieve the deep sorrows originating from their painful immigrant experiences. Furthermore, funeral rituals that focus on the images of liberation from *han* and on *jeong* may help Korean Americans to deeply understand the love of God, to feel the nearness of God, and to become more securely grounded in their Christian faith.

CHAPTER 5

Purposes and Functions of Christian Funeral Rituals

Historically, the funeral has served as a ceremony which acknowledges death, serves as a religious rite, and offers an occasion to reassure and reestablish the social group. In addition, the funeral provides an opportunity to commemorate life and functions as a ritual of disposal of a dead body.¹ For most societies over the centuries, the funeral has been considered a vital function. Robert Kastenbaum suggests that the funeral is an extensive process that includes many aspects, such as law, finance, symbolism, interpersonal issues, and technical matters beyond the graveside rites.² Specifically, in their discussions and planning with the bereaved, funeral directors and ministers consider the funeral location, the times of events, language and symbol, disposal of the body, social consolidation, family cohesion, and post-funeral rituals.³

During the period of the funeral, funeral rituals have played a significant and valuable role in adjusting persons to crisis and facilitating their grief. With regard to the psychological aspect of funeral rituals, some scholars (Gennep, 1961; Lindemann, 1963; Irion, 1981) have acknowledged the value of such rituals for not only facilitating the grief process but also for providing comfort and structure as well as opportunities for directly confronting the loss.⁴ For instance, Irion argues that funeral rituals have several fundamental psychological functions: (1) to increase acceptance of the loss, (2) to sanction and encourage the expression of one's feelings toward the reality in which one finds oneself, and (3) to participate in the process of working

¹ Robert Fulton, "The Contemporary Funeral: Functional or Dysfunctional?" in *Dying: Facing the Facts*, ed. Hannelore Wass and Robert A. Neimeyer, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1995), 185.

² Robert. J. Kastenbaum, *Death, Society, and Human Experience*, 4th ed. (New York: Merrill, 1991), 67-85.

³ Kastenbaum, 67-85.

⁴ Paul E. Irion, "The Funeral and the Bereaved," in *Acute Grief and the Funeral*, Vanderlyn R. Pine, et al., (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1976), 33.

through these feelings.⁵ With regard to the social aspect of funeral rituals, several scholars (Goody, 1962; Malinowski, 1984; Mandelbaum, 1959; Van Gennep, 1961) have emphasized their function in promoting the emotional well-being of the individual through social support and in providing opportunities for renewed social cohesion and structural re-integration of the larger group.⁶ For example, Malinowski argues that funeral rituals have the potential to provide the means for restoring a group's solidarity, broken morale, and internal relationships.⁷

However, the rapid social changes originating from industrialization and urbanization in contemporary society have led to the loss of meaningful ceremonies and rites which help the bereaved to facilitate the grief process and to feel comfort and emotional stabilization. Bolton and Camp argue that the decline of funeral rites due to rapid social change in modern society is evidence that it has become a "death-denying society."⁸ They state that death-denying notions in American society disturb the grieving process of the bereaved and result in dissatisfaction with the funeral ritual.⁹ Royal Keith critiques the attitude that contemporary funeral rituals are meaningless and valueless elements in the grief process, thus leading "many survivors to anticipate that post-death activities with a ceremonial or ritualistic form can be eliminated without any detrimental effects on the resolution of acute grief."¹⁰

In the current death-denying social climate with its decline in mourning rituals, Korean American Christians, who have been influenced by traditional Korean funerary culture, have experienced difficulty developing their own ways of grieving.

⁵ Irion, 33.

⁶ Fulton, 185.

⁷ Fulton, 185.

⁸ Christopher Bolton and Delpha J. Camp, "Funeral Rituals and the Facilitation of Grief Work," *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* 17 (1986-1987) : 343-52.

⁹ Bolton and Camp, 343-45.

¹⁰ Royal Keith, "Acute Grief and Survivor Expectations," in *Acute Grief*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 204.

According to Soo-Young Kwon, the American manner of encouraging mourners to quickly move through their grief may be detrimental to mourners from other cultures. These mourners may need different approaches that encourage them to feel their loss and to remember the deceased long after the funeral.¹¹ Kwon argues that “how we grieve and cope with the death of loved ones in some different cultures should be reflected in and influenced by the way we do our funerals.”¹² Further, Kwon suggests that if pastors want to minister to Korean Americans in times of grief and loss, they should be cultural aware, that is, knowing how Korean Americans interpret death as well as how traditional Korean funeral rituals influence Korean American Christians. Based upon the studies of Kwon, Bolton and Camp, and Keith, it is necessary that funeral directors or ministers consider the unique experiences and contexts, cultural backgrounds, and religious traditions of the bereaved, their relatives, and their friends, especially when they are situated between two cultures. Also, when they prepare and perform funeral rituals for Korean American Christians, it is necessary that pastors complement typical American-style funerals but also seek for alternative ideas to help the bereaved grieve their loss. In this chapter, I will explore the purpose of Christian funeral rituals and their functions in terms of the grief process.

Purposes of Christian Funeral Rituals

Funeral rituals generally serve three types of purposes: psychological, social, and religious. Irion, in his work, focuses on the psychological needs of mourners. He suggests that funeral rituals are psychologically helpful to mourners in that they facilitate the process of coping with the crisis originating from the loss of a loved

¹¹ Soo-Young Kwon, “Homecoming Rituals: Weaving Multicultural Funeral Narratives,” *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 57 no.4 (2003) : 405.

¹² Kwon, 405.

one.¹³ First, funeral rituals help the bereaved increase acceptance of their loss. When the bereaved are faced with the death of a loved one, it is difficult for them to accept that their loved one is really gone. Usually, they are not only unable to cope with the reality of death, but they also have a hard time dealing with their loss.¹⁴ However, funeral rituals encourage the bereaved to talk about death and to deal with the loss of the bereaved more realistically.¹⁵ Second, funeral rituals help the bereaved grieve their loss. According to Lloyd, those who experience the death of loved ones need to meaningfully work through their personal trauma or disappointment in order for there to be resolution of the grief. He asserts that funeral rituals provide an opportunity to do this work.¹⁶ Each culture shapes the way the bereaved react to the news of death. Also, the responses of each individual who experiences the loss of a loved one are different and unique according to the individual's own circumstances and personality. Nonetheless, the bereaved can express their feelings and emotions through participation in funeral rituals, and emotional expression through attending funeral rituals can function as part of the grieving process.¹⁷ A third psychological purpose of funeral rituals is to support the process of remembering the positive highlights of the deceased one's life.¹⁸

One social purpose of funeral rituals is that they provide an opportunity for people to display their sympathy to the bereaved—those who are suffering from the pain of losing a loved one.¹⁹ Lloyd notes that attending a funeral is a particular way of expressing compassion and support to the bereaved. Mourners, such as friends,

¹³ Irion, "Funeral and the Bereaved," 33.

¹⁴ Dan S. Lloyd, *Leading Today's Funerals: A Pastoral Guide for Improving Bereavement Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997) 17.

¹⁵ Lloyd, 18.

¹⁶ Lloyd, 16.

¹⁷ Irion, "Funeral and the Bereaved," 34.

¹⁸ Lloyd, 18.

¹⁹ Lloyd, 16.

colleagues, or church members, can demonstrate their compassion and support to the bereaved by giving flowers, speaking words of sympathy, and weeping tears of sorrow at the funeral.²⁰ Another social value of funeral rituals is to express respect for the deceased.²¹ Although there are devastating effects on the bereaved family if the life of the deceased was not honest or proper, showing respect for the dead during the funeral may help the bereaved to experience reconciliation with the deceased. With regard to their religious aspects, one purpose of funeral rituals is to provide an occasion for instilling hope in those who feel they have lost all hope. In particular, Christian funeral rituals are more concerned about hope because the “minister emphasizes the forgiveness of sin, the promise of eternal life, [and] the assurance of God’s presence and love.”²² Finally, funerals help the bereaved prepare for death. People may realize the frailty of human existence by attending a funeral, but the funeral may also alleviate the fear that comes with such a realization.

While Lloyd discusses the purpose of funeral rituals in general, Irion considers the purposes of specifically Christian funeral rituals. For Irion, Christian funeral rituals should focus on three dimensions: theological, cultural, and psychological. Irion asserts that funeral rituals that take into account these three dimensions will make a distinctive and unique contribution to bereaved families and their fellow church members.²³ With regard to the theological aspect, one of the purposes of Christian funeral rituals is “to relate the bereaved to God in such a way that they can draw upon the resources of God’s spirit in their hour of confusion and need.”²⁴ In other words, Christian funeral rituals should strive to bring the bereaved

²⁰ Lloyd, 17.

²¹ Lloyd, 18.

²² Lloyd, 19.

²³ Paul E. Irion, *The Funeral and the Mourners: Pastoral Care for the Bereaved* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, [1954]), 62.

²⁴ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 63.

and mourners into right relationship with God. Irion calls this first purpose a theocentric purpose. Also, the theological purpose of Christian funeral rituals should include providing a sense of comfort and peace of mind through the realization of the existence of God's love.²⁵ Irion argues that the Christian funeral has emphasized this theocentric perspective, which means it has focused on the resources of God's Spirit in moments of sorrow, grief, and confusion in terms of the traditional Christian view.²⁶ However, Irion warns that "the funeral for exhortation or evangelism is no longer practiced in the main streams of Protestantism."²⁷ These types of funerals may generate guilt feelings and hostility rather than helping people to mourn. Irion states that contemporary funeral rituals need to focus on not only easing guilt feelings and hostilities but also facilitating the grief of the bereaved, even though it is also important to draw the bereaved and their fellow mourners closer to the church.²⁸

With regard to the cultural dimension, Christian funeral rituals aim for fellowship and consolidation within the Christian faith community.²⁹ According to Terenzio and Romanoff, "funeral ritual mediates not only the transition of the deceased from life to death, but it also mediates the transition of the bereaved from one social status to another."³⁰ Post-funeral bereavement rituals may also provide structure to mourners' grieving and help them to fully incorporate a sense of their new social status caused by their loss.³¹ In addition, Christian funeral rituals help the bereaved to find their identity as a Christian in a faith community. They affirm the relationship of the deceased to the community, and the culture of a specific faith

²⁵ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 63.

²⁶ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 63.

²⁷ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 63.

²⁸ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 64.

²⁹ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 64.

³⁰ Bronna D. Romanoff and Mario Terenzio, "Rituals and the Grieving Process," *Death Studies* 22 (1998) : 698.

³¹ Romanoff and Terenzio, 699.

community can provide a means by which people can mourn and reduce the pain and tension of grief. Christian funeral rituals provide opportunities for displays of grief, structures for the delimitation of grief, and vehicles for affirming the relationship of the deceased to the community.³² One cultural structure that may help mourners through the grief process and renegotiation of identity may be expectations for the wearing of specific symbols or types of clothing. Some people may mourn by wearing dark clothing, while mourners who are influenced by different cultures may ease their pain and sorrow by wearing white clothing. Therefore, Christian funeral rituals need to consider the specific cultures and customs of the bereaved.

In terms of psychological purposes, Christian funeral rituals serve the function of establishing a climate for therapeutic mourning.³³ While funeral rituals help the bereaved to recognize their loss and offer the opportunity in which loss can be shared by a community and other people, Irion asserts that therapeutic mourning in Christian funeral rituals can be facilitated through harmonization between the theocentric purpose and the role of fellowship with the faith community.³⁴ In addition, Christian funeral rituals that emphasize the provision of divine and human love for the bereaved are psychologically efficacious for both the bereaved and the faith community. Because the traumatic experience of loss decreases the capacity of mourners to love, the bereaved are apt to fail to increase their mental health by building loving relationships with others. However, Christian funeral rituals provide an opportunity to express sympathy and to restore the bereaved persons' capacity to love through the provision of divine and human love that does not demand love in

³² Romanoff and Terenzio, 698-99.

³³ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 64.

³⁴ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 64.

return.³⁵ They help the bereaved open themselves to love.

Consequently, Irion asserts that Christian churches and their ministers should provide effective and meaningful funeral rituals by fulfilling the purposes discussed above. Theological, cultural, and psychological purposes need to be blended together in human existence. Psychological elements should be integrated with both the theological understanding of death and cultural and social sources because all three dimensions are needed by humans.³⁶ Therefore, Irion suggests the following criteria for effective and meaningful funeral rituals:

1. The funeral must deal with death realistically.
2. The funeral must present a vision of God which will be of comfort and help to the mourners in their suffering. This includes the understanding of the love of God, the nearness of God, and God's concern for people.
3. The funeral must see man as an individual of worth, turning man's attention to the importance of his personal integration and the resources which God offers for the strengthening and stabilizing of the self.
4. The funeral must demonstrate that the Christian faith is a resource which enables the individual to mourn, rather than a substitute for mourning.
5. The funeral must recognize and accept deep feelings, rather than cover them up by a superficial aestheticism.
6. The funeral must provide a sense of finality.
7. The funeral must be an aid in recalling memories of the deceased.
8. The funeral is to establish a climate for mourning.
9. The funeral must be sensitive to the individual needs of the bereaved, dynamic, variable in both form and content.³⁷

Funeral Rituals, Their Functions, and Grieving Process

Funeral rituals serve the purpose of providing a space for grieving the death of loved ones and for coping with their loss. Also, funeral rituals aim for the reintegration of the fragmented and wounded self as a result of loss and of the individual into the social community. Furthermore, the Christian funeral ritual, as a mechanism for coping with loss, is an extensive process that helps the bereaved to have emotional and psychological stability, to adjust to their new status within their

³⁵ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 74.

³⁶ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 73.

³⁷ Irion, *Funeral and the Mourners*, 86-87.

community and the fellowship of their faith community, and to find comfort through realizing the existence of God's love. On the basis of studies about the purposes of funeral rituals, I will explore the functions of funeral rituals in terms of the grieving process. Three types of functions will be discussed: psychological, religious, and social/cultural.

1. Psychological Function

Kraeer's research into the value of funeral rituals uncovered a variety of self-report measures of psychological symptoms.³⁸ In the case of direct disposition of the body and no funeral service, 34% of 800 bereaved participants experienced difficulty grieving their loss. These participants had significant symptoms, such as chronic anger, fear, depression, and social withdrawal. When there were limited formalized rites, such as direct disposition or no funeral service, 22% of the participants were unsuccessful in the reorientation process. Also, it should be noted that 12% of the total number of participants experienced adjustment problems.³⁹ Kraeer's study shows not only how funeral rituals are important to the grieving process, but it also supports the conclusion that funeral rituals make a significant contribution to decreasing psychological dysfunction following the trauma of loss.

As Kraeer's research demonstrates, funeral rituals serve several important psychological functions. First, funeral rituals have the function of providing a space for emotional expression associated with loss. Emotional expression is an essential part of the grieving process. According to Barrett, if mourners are not given the opportunity to express grief and their emotions at the time of the funeral, the task of grieving is not only left for the post-funeral period, it may not be undertaken for a

³⁸ R. Jay Kraeer, "The Therapeutic Value of the Funeral in Post-Funeral Counseling," in *Acute Grief*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 253.

³⁹ Kraeer, 254.

long time.⁴⁰ Stephenson also agrees that emotional expression through funeral rituals is important to successful grief work. In contemporary society, individuals are inclined to suppress grief and return to everyday life very quickly following a loss, without taking enough time to express emotions associated with the loss.⁴¹ The presence of open-ended grieving and the lack of ritualized activities blur the boundaries of grief and increase confusion and frustration for the bereaved.⁴² Although not all feelings and emotions will emerge fully in funeral rituals, it is one of the functions of funeral rituals to provide a context of freedom and acceptance which will permit the emergence and assimilation of feelings as part of the grieving process.⁴³

Second, emotional expression in funeral rituals leads to another function served by these rituals. Several authors (Imber-Black, 1991; Rando, 1985; Jacobs, 1992) suggest that funeral rituals may act as a healing process.⁴⁴ They agree that funeral rites serve a healing function because they believe that the acknowledgment and expression of mourners' feelings during such rites not only ease feelings of anxiety, but the rites also provide structure and order at a time of chaos and disorder created by the event of death.⁴⁵ According to Imber-Black and Rando, funeral rituals have a repetitive and prescribed character. For them, this characteristic structure supports a healing process of restoring fragmented selves, healing wounded hearts, and providing comfort.⁴⁶ In particular, Imber-Black asserts that such mourning rituals, composed of metaphors, symbols, and actions in a highly condensed dramatic form,

⁴⁰ Carolyn J. Barrett, "Signs," *Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 2 (1977) : 858.

⁴¹ John S. Stephenson, *Death, Grief, and Mourning: Individual and Social Realities* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 201-02.

⁴² Stephenson, 202.

⁴³ Irion, "Funeral and the Bereaved," 38.

⁴⁴ Romanoff and Terenzio, 698.

⁴⁵ Romanoff and Terenzio, 698.

⁴⁶ Romanoff and Terenzio, 698.

have a healing function, that is, to help people come together to grieve and to allow for the initial expression of pain and loss in a context designed to promote interpersonal connectedness.⁴⁷ For example, the mourning rituals, such as the last moments of the dying person with loved ones, a shared meal, and visiting the bereaved after a death, prevent dysfunctional isolation during the period of immediate loss and acute grief and facilitate healing tasks.⁴⁸ However, Imber-Black indicates that the lack of authentic mourning rituals and the death-denying attitude of contemporary society hinder the required healing processes after a death has occurred.⁴⁹ For instance, because most people die in hospitals surrounded by complex technology rather than at home surrounded by familiar items and symbols, there is little that functions to facilitate healing the bereaved. Therefore, he suggests developing familial and culturally relevant rituals, because these rituals can help the bereaved feel comfortable expressing their emotions and can heal their wounded hearts. In addition, the symbolic rituals of any family's life are the best healing methods. Such rituals can not only facilitate grief in ways that are consonant with a family's or culture's values but also express a given culture's beliefs.⁵⁰

Elliot Rosen agrees with Imber-Black's perspective that funeral rituals function as healing processes. For Rosen, rituals can be helpful both during periods of terminal illness and long after the initial mourning period.⁵¹ He recommends a family ritual as a healing method. Such a ritual is a set of "behaviors that are created anew as part of an intervention designed to help the family's healing process."⁵² In particular,

⁴⁷ Evan Imber-Black, "Rituals and the Healing Process," in *Living Beyond Loss: Death in the Family*, ed. Froma Walsh and Monica McGoldrick (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), 207.

⁴⁸ Imber-Black, 207.

⁴⁹ Imber-Black, 209.

⁵⁰ Imber-Black, 222.

⁵¹ Elliott J. Rosen, *Families Facing Death: Family Dynamics of Terminal Illness* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990), 134.

⁵² Rosen, 134.

creating rituals, which include symbolic and metaphoric meanings based upon a specific family's situation, is very helpful for those who face death and suffer from pain and sorrow generated from the loss of a loved one.⁵³ For example, a family which is experiencing the life-threatening illness of a family member may need a symbolic means to express pain, unexpressible feelings, or unresolved grief. While Imber-Black emphasizes that family-specific and culturally relevant funeral rituals are essential for the healing of the bereaved, Rosen focuses on creating family-centered and religiously symbolic rituals for the bereaved in order to assuage their pain and sorrow.

2. Religious Function

Funeral rituals serve specific religious functions within each religious tradition. Patterson discusses the importance of the religious aspects revealed in funerals.⁵⁴ Catholics tend to view the funeral as a means for prayer and salvation of the soul. In the Catholic perspective, the funeral also has a commemorative function, which involves honoring both the memory and the body of the deceased. Protestants tend to see the funeral as a vehicle for peace and providing comfort for the bereaved and hope for future life. Exhortation and sharing memories of the deceased are basic functions of Jewish funeral rites.⁵⁵

The religious functions of funeral rituals are closely connected with their psychological roles. Janet Jacobs studied the interactive relation between psychology and religion in funeral rituals. She found that funeral rituals increase mental health through a religious cathartic release generated from the expression of grief and

⁵³ Rosen, 135.

⁵⁴ Paul R. Patterson, "Children and the Ritual of the Mortuary," in *Grief and the Meaning of the Funeral*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: MSS Information, 1975), 86.

⁵⁵ Patterson, 86.

emotion.⁵⁶ Scheff also argues that a “funeral ritual offers a form of cathartic release by creating conditions under which the mourners can become actively involved in the expression of feeling.”⁵⁷ However, Scheff indicates that the tendency toward cathartic release distances mourners from the intensity of the emotional experience, even though cathartic release in funeral rituals allows for the recognition of emotional distress and the reduction of anxiety.⁵⁸ For example, the ritual of prayer serves to distance both the bereaved and the mourners from the reality of death. Jacobs, on the other hand, believes that religious cathartic release reinforces connection and attachment to significant others, such as a divine being, a spiritual leader, a religious community, or an entire society.⁵⁹ She asserts that the sense of connectedness gained by religious cathartic release provides a support to facilitate the grief and sorrow, rather than distancing the mourner from the intensity of the emotional experience. For Jacobs, the sense of connectedness facilitates “the cathartic response through which painful emotion can be brought to consciousness, and relieved or expressed for the first time.”⁶⁰ Thus, the sense of connectedness created by cathartic release increases the mental health of the bereaved. From a religious point of view, the sense of connectedness experienced through cathartic release reinforces a sense of connection with a divine God as well as a faith community.

In addition, as the release of religious catharsis helps to increase the mental health of the bereaved and reinforces their connection with God, certain religious symbols associated with religious ceremonies also provide comfort and emotional stability. Willadean Turner argues that religious persons often seek out religious

⁵⁶ Janet L. Jacobs, “Religious Ritual and Mental Health,” in *Religion and Mental Health*, ed. John F. Schumaker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 291.

⁵⁷ Thomas J. Scheff, *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual, and Drama* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), as cited in Jacobs, 291.

⁵⁸ Jacobs, 291.

⁵⁹ Jacobs, 291.

⁶⁰ Jacobs, 291.

symbols to assist them in grieving their loss.⁶¹ For Turner, the Christian symbols of the cross, altar, church, crucifix, and minister provide comfort during a time of loss, and these Christian symbols help the bereaved to grieve their loss and reduce anxiety and painful emotions. Likewise, playing religious music at the funeral can also be a means to relieve some of the burden of grief by soothing and providing consolation. Turner cites the statement of Fos in order to attest to the effectiveness of religious music:

Organ music should have a consoling radiance. When playing for a memorial or funeral service, the organist should produce clean, uprising sounds, as opposed to the heavy ponderous tones. When playing a variety of pieces, I feel that the music is reaching someone, and relieving some part of the emotional burden of the occasion. Organ music can affect people who already are too excited and bring them right down, giving them great quiet and peace. Also, religious organ music can comfort a person under the pressure of great sorrow.⁶²

As part of the funeral, the role of religious music is to help calm those who are upset and to lift some of their heaviness of heart.

From a religious perspective, another function of funeral rituals is to provide an opportunity for the bereaved to proclaim their faith and to reduce the sense of isolation that is attached to feelings of shame and guilt.⁶³ Faith assuages the uncertainty of loss and allows for the affirmation of death as a natural and expected phenomenon. The confession of religious belief and faith is the core of ritualized acts in the funeral service. Through ritual acts of confession, the mourners can have not only an opportunity for penitence and emotional expression of self-blame, but they can also reduce the shame and

⁶¹ Willadean W. Turner, "Grief Therapy for the Bereaved," in *Grief and the Meaning of the Funeral*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: MSS Information, 1975), 75-76.

⁶² V. Fos, "Organ Music Should Have a Consoling Radiance," *American Funeral Director* 92 (1969) : 29, as cited in Turner, 76.

⁶³ Jacobs, 293-94.

self-loathing that accompanies perceptions of sin and wrongdoing.⁶⁴ Jacobs believes that it is possible to reduce anxiety through ritualized confessions because they are most commonly directed at a divine being or a representative of God who has the power to forgive.⁶⁵ Eventually, confession, as a cathartic release, eases the penitent's moral isolation and increases self-esteem and self-acceptance as a Christian or believer.

3. Social and Cultural Function

From a social and cultural standpoint, funeral rituals and ceremonies function as a means for assisting social transitions and facilitating communal connections. Romanoff and Terenzio assert that funeral rituals provide transforming, transitioning, and connecting functions within the bereavement process. According to them, successful resolution of the grief process requires three dimensions: moderation or transformation of the person's sense of self resulting from loss (intrapsychic dimension), mediation or transition between the individual's pre-death and post-death social status (psychosocial dimension), and continuation of an intrapsychic connection with the deceased (communal context).⁶⁶ They claim that funeral rituals should functionally and effectively serve these three dimensions for successful resolution of bereavement. With regard to the dimension of moderation or transformation, funeral rituals are able to mold and unify the significance of the deceased within the intrapsychic life of the mourner.⁶⁷ This transformation of the bereaved by participating in funeral rituals involves an identification of the bereaved with the deceased and a modification of personal constructs or inner representations. The bereaved person symbolically bonds with the deceased through characteristics of the

⁶⁴ Jacobs, 292.

⁶⁵ Jacobs, 292.

⁶⁶ Romanoff and Terenzio, 699.

⁶⁷ Romanoff and Terenzio, 700.

deceased, memories, and their associated affective attributes. While the aspect of moderation or transformation is a psychological function of funeral rituals, it is more relevant to the social and cultural function of funeral rites in that it is about a relationship to the deceased that helps the bereaved form a new identity.

Through performing funeral rituals, the bereaved can provoke the development of new attachments and a new locus in the social order.⁶⁸ Further, funeral rituals can aid in the development of these new relationships. In funeral rituals, the bereaved and mourners are able to find new identities and social statuses, even though the bereaved individual is detached from the social structure and is between statuses.⁶⁹ Jacobs also emphasizes the value of transition as a social and cultural function of funeral rituals. For her, funeral rituals are a means to facilitate the mourners' identification with the suffering of the deceased at the time of the chaotic state created by loss.⁷⁰ The identification of the mourners with the deceased serves a transitional function during the funeral. For example, Jewish mourners identify themselves with those who died during the Holocaust, which engenders deep emotions of grief and a collective sorrow.⁷¹ Through this ethnic identification with victims of the Holocaust or with others in the Jewish tradition, they can not only remember their identity and social status in the world but also seek out a new identity for the future.⁷² In addition, funeral rituals are important to the identity of each individual because mourners can socially recognize the continuing existence of human beings as they pass to another stage in life. This identification with the deceased through participating in the funeral has particular meaning for elderly people, who are more likely to find themselves in close and frequent contact with death.

⁶⁸ Romanoff and Terenzio, 701.

⁶⁹ Romanoff and Terenzio, 701.

⁷⁰ Jacobs, 294.

⁷¹ Jacobs, 295.

⁷² Jacobs, 295.

David Mandelbaum, an anthropologist, studies the social function of funeral ceremonies. He argues that funeral rituals serve both manifest and latent functions. “Manifest functions” refer to the roles of those activities commonly associated with mortuary rites.⁷³ “Latent functions” refer to the results of economic and social actions related to the loss. Funeral rituals produce obligations and behaviors by the family that reinforce family cohesion.⁷⁴ A second latent function of funeral rituals is the acknowledgment and affirmation of the extended kinship system.⁷⁵ Mandelbaum states that a third latent function of funeral rites is the strengthening of group solidarity through the interactions that characterize the mourning process.⁷⁶ For instance, funeral rituals and ceremonies are important to the development of elderly persons as they face end-of-life transitions. Older people in society experience more opportunities to attend funeral rituals than people in other age groups. Their emotional needs at times of loss may differ from the needs of younger generations. From the standpoint of the social function, funeral rituals may strengthen the solidarity of older members in a community, reinforcing a sense of group cohesion.

Turner mentions that some funeral rituals create healing effects and group cohesion through the ceremonial expression of anger and hostility against more powerful members of a community or society.⁷⁷ According to Turner, such funeral rituals can allow “the powerless to vent their anger and hostility at those who oppress and abuse them.”⁷⁸ For instance, healing rites found among feminist spirituality groups in the United States provide an opportunity to express ritualized anger and to

⁷³ David G. Mandelbaum, “Social Uses of Funeral Rites,” in *The Meaning of Death*, ed. Herman Feifel, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), 195.

⁷⁴ Mandelbaum, 195.

⁷⁵ Mandelbaum, 195.

⁷⁶ Jacobs, 294.

⁷⁷ Willadean W. Turner, “Grief Therapy for the Bereaved,” in *Grief and the Meaning of the Funeral*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: MSS Information, 1975), as cited in Jacobs, 296.

⁷⁸ Turner, “Grief Therapy for the Bereaved,” as cited in Jacobs, 296.

experience catharsis from feelings of revenge and hostility.⁷⁹ Through participation in goddess-centered healing rites, women who have been or are being physically and sexually abused can find strength through symbolically avenging their violation. Likewise, the expression of anger and hostility may be helpful for the grieving process of bereaved persons who are mourning the violent death of a loved one, even though this type of ritual may be more secular than religious in nature. In addition, the expression of anger and hostility is helpful for those who experience oppression, powerlessness, and discrimination in society.⁸⁰ Within African American, Native American, Latin American, or Asian (including Korean) American populations, it might be helpful for negative consequence or retaliation.⁸¹ The inclusion of cathartic release of such emotions during funeral rituals may provide a social identity and emotional connection for disenfranchised and alienated members of society.⁸²

In summary, for successful grief resolution, funeral rituals should fulfill needs and serve functions in three dimensions: the psychological, religious, and social and cultural.

⁷⁹ Jacobs, 297.

⁸⁰ Jacobs, 297.

⁸¹ Jacobs, 297.

⁸² Jacobs, 298.

CHAPTER 6

Alternative Funeral Rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church

The lack of meaningful mourning rites and ceremonies has created a widespread cultural denial of death that hinders the healing process needed after a death.¹ In addition, the neglect of continuity of connection with the deceased inhibits a meaningful and successful grieving resolution. Romanoff and Terenzio indicate that funeral rituals in contemporary American culture tend to overlook the continuity of connection between the bereaved and the deceased, and they emphasize transforming or transitioning functions in funeral rituals.² They affirm that transition and transformation can continuously occur when continuity of connection with the deceased is maintained during the grieving process of the bereaved.³ Attention to all three dimensions—transformation, transition, and the continuity of connection with the deceased—increases the possibility of a successful grieving process. Therefore, funeral directors or caregivers should focus on helping the bereaved to maintain connections based on memory and meaning, so emotional energy will be available for developing new relationships, new social statuses, and new identities.⁴

Korean Americans, like other Americans, struggle with issues related to the lack of meaningful funeral rites and the neglect of continuity of connection with the deceased during their grieving processes. Although Korean Americans have continued to be influenced by Korean culture, they have been simultaneously influenced by American culture. They are in between cultural contexts. In this situation, Korean Americans often experience maladjustment to the dominant American types of funeral rituals, which encourage mourners to hide or control their grief and get back to work

¹ Imber-Black, 209.

² Romanoff and Terenzio, 702.

³ Romanoff and Terenzio, 703.

⁴ Romanoff and Terenzio, 703.

within a matter of days.⁵ In relation to the religious and practical implications of the multicultural grieving process, Imber-Black suggests that the development of culturally relevant funeral rituals can facilitate grief in ways that are consonant with a given culture's values and beliefs.⁶ He asserts that performing familiar traditional rituals or using symbols and symbolic acts related to a specific culture are helpful for the multicultural bereaved to deal with profound loss and grief. Furthermore, using familiar rituals and symbolic acts related to a specific culture both connect the mourners with the familiar and provide a pathway through the unfamiliar. While Imber-Black focuses on developing culturally relevant symbols and symbolic acts for public funeral rites, Rosen centers on creating family rituals that include symbolic and metaphoric meanings based upon the specific family's characteristics and which will be helpful for close family members who face a death and suffer from pain and sorrow generated from the loss of a loved one.⁷ Kwon emphasizes the religious and practical implications of the multicultural grieving process through a comparative study of dominant American funeral culture and traditional Korean funeral culture. Thus, funeral directors or ministers for Korean American mourners need to develop culturally relevant funeral rituals, to create symbolic family rituals related to specific family situations, and to seek for alternative and appropriate funeral rituals through comparative study of Korean and American funeral cultures. In this chapter, I explore alternative religious and practical applications for the multicultural grieving process and a comparative study between the funeral rituals of the American and Korean cultures.

Pre-Funeral Rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church

⁵ Kwon, 405.

⁶ Imber-Black, 209.

⁷ Rosen, 135.

1. The Context of Dying

Koreans usually think that the most important elements for a “good death” are that people should die at home, surrounded by all their children and family members.⁸ Although the primary place of death in American culture has been changed from the home to the hospital in the past half-century, Korean Americans still view dying at home as the “good death.”⁹ This tendency is deeply connected with Korean understandings of death and humanity. For Koreans, the funeral rite is not a ritual oriented toward the eternal; rather, the most striking part of the Korean funeral is the rite for returning the soul to its origin, where it stays before it re-unites with human flesh.¹⁰ Korean funeral rites reveal specific understandings about the human spirit. In the light of traditional Korean understanding, people believe that there are three spirits in the human body, and the three spirits are separated from one another after death. One is carried to heaven or the other world. Another spirit stays in the body. The third spirit stays around the home. Actually, traditionally, the third spirit stays in the box for the spirit (*honback sangja*).¹¹ After burial, the *honback sangja* is preserved for two years in the home. Currently, most Koreans do not keep the *honback sangja* at home after the burial, but they hold the belief that the third spirit of the deceased lives with the deceased person’s offspring.¹² The traditional Korean understanding of the human spirit has unconsciously influenced people’s choices about where they die. If Koreans or Korean Americans are able to die at home rather than in a hospital, home is considered the best place for the deceased as well as the bereaved family. In the same way, it is helpful for the grieving process if a family is able to place a dying person in a deathbed in the warmest part of a bedroom, because Koreans have traditionally

⁸ Kwon, 409.

⁹ Kwon, 409.

¹⁰ Kwon, 407.

¹¹ Kwon, 407.

¹² Kwon, 407.

thought that placing the body of the dead in the warmest part of a bedroom is the best way to show their filial duty to the deceased.

2. The Planning for the Funeral Service and Rituals

After death, the most important pre-funeral ritual is to participate in the planning of the funeral. According to Bruce Conley, the primary effect of active participation in the planning of a funeral is to help mourners increase their ability to transform potential energies into kinetic energies of expression.¹³ For him, the discussion of what happened to the deceased and the recollection of the dead person's life with all the children and other family members provides a natural setting for the discussion of grief and the value of mourning.¹⁴ Conley describes his work with one family, which illustrates the value of direct and active involvement in the planning of the funeral.

After a grandfather died suddenly, leaving eight grandchildren, nearly all of whom were in some way involved in the discovery of their grandfather's body and the calling of the emergency squad. After arrangements had been made with the parents and the needs of the children discussed, a gathering with the grandchildren was held in the home of the surviving grandparent. Initially, I asked each grandchild to share without interruption his or her version of what happened the day of their grandfather's death. They recollected the grandfather's life with both tears and laughter. After some further discussion, they made their individual decisions, which were subsequently authorized by their parents. The funeral service was conducted with six pallbearers ranging in ages from 12 to 18, including two girls. Another child chose to play a piano piece for the funeral. By the end of the funeral, most family members had placed something in the casket as their token of goodbye or as an expression of those things left unsaid or unfinished. On follow-up after the funeral (six months and one year later) no adjustment difficulties were noted.¹⁵

Conley argues that most bereaved who directly and actively participate in the planning of the funeral experience have good grief and no adjustment difficulties, in

¹³ Bruce Conley, "Interdisciplinary Care in Adolescent Bereavement," *Family Therapy Collections* 8 (1984) : 61-63.

¹⁴ Conley, 68.

¹⁵ Conley, 67-68.

contrast to the bereaved who do not have direct and active involvement in the planning.¹⁶ Generally, Koreans tend to have passive participation and involvement in the planning of funerals. The head of a family decides nearly all the procedures for the funeral of the deceased, while children and other relatives are silent observers in the discussion and the planning. Based on the work of Conley, this tendency of Koreans is not helpful for their grief processes. Therefore, funeral directors and ministers need to recommend and encourage the direct and active involvement of all close family members in the discussion as well as the planning of the funeral.

3. The Timing of the Funeral

With regard to the timing of the funeral, some have criticized funeral practices because these practices occur too early in the grief process. Irene Sullivan believes the psychological value of the funeral service is compromised because the funeral service occurs too soon after the loss to constitute a successful rite of passage.¹⁷ Memorial societies point out that funeral rituals address concepts not relevant to people in the early stages of mourning; they should be done when the bereaved are most deeply immersed in their grief.¹⁸ However, bereaved individuals are expected to quickly return to the everyday life of American society, and they tend to be admired for suppressing their grief and sorrow.¹⁹ This implies that early reactions to death and societal expectations may impede the capacity of the bereaved to fully participate in and benefit from funeral rituals. Therefore, a period of delay between the death and the final disposition of the body should be considered an important element for meaningful and effective grieving. There are other reasons why a delay might be needed. For example, taking into consideration practical and psychological reasons, it

¹⁶ Conley, 68.

¹⁷ Irene Sullivan, "A Post-Funeral Counseling Program," in *Acute Grief*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 182.

¹⁸ Sullivan, 183.

¹⁹ Stephenson, 202.

may be necessary to allow time for distant friends and relatives to gather for the funeral. Also, certain death circumstances require alterations in the typical time sequence for services, as is the case when actions must be taken in the public interest, such as in circumstances of communicable diseases and unknown or uncertain causes of death. An increased time interval between the death and the funeral thus allows for many personal and emotional needs of the bereaved to be addressed.

4. The Funeral Ritual as a “Rite of Passage”

The conceptualization of the funeral as a “rite of passage”²⁰ is helpful for Korean American mourners, because Koreans have long understood the funeral ritual as a rite of passage. As one aspect of this rite of passage, caretaking activities, such as combing the deceased person’s hair, adding a necklace, or fixing a tie, have been beneficial to release emotions and to grieve feelings of loss in the context of American society. These caretaking activities may involve symbolic “preparing for the journey” behaviors. In Korea, on the day following the death, the body is washed (*sup*) and wrapped (*yom*) in order to prepare for the journey to the other world.

In Korea, the bereaved family members and relatives are required to witness the wrapping ceremony (*yom*) as it is conducted by the chief mourner, while in the U.S., the funeral industry performs caretaking activities out of sight of bereaved families. It is interesting that most Koreans in contemporary society still preserve these ceremonies by doing them on the day following the death; even Korean Christians maintain these ceremonial practices. Kwon asserts that the Korean practice of *yom* as a symbolic act facilitates the acceptance of death and physical separation

²⁰ Stephenson notes that Van Genepp defines a rite of passage as consisting of three stages, the first of which is separation, in which old relationships cease to be valid. The second stage, of liminality, refers to the person as being in transition between life and death. This stage is usually marked by the pronouncement of physical death. The third stage is that of reintegration, where the tasks of reinstatement into social roles and affirmation of community social values are met. Stephenson, *Death, Grief, and Mourning*, 200.

and gives the bereaved comfort.²¹

Koreans never embalm corpses. Kwon states that embalming is contrary to the Korean funeral custom that permits the body to decompose into the soil as soon as possible.²² Most Asians, including Koreans, believe that the body of the deceased should return to the dust of the ground. Based upon this belief, they not only wash the body of the deceased with a piece of cloth or cotton that has been soaked in warm Artemisia water, but they also wrap the body with a long hemp cloth known as *yom*. Kwon argues on the basis of Genesis 3:19 that these burial ceremonies are more biblical than embalming: "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."²³ While the practice of embalming is against Jewish tradition, Kwon asserts that it is also not a Christian way. Although Christians may practice embalming based on their resurrection beliefs, and this may help the bereaved to feel comforted, the ritual of embalming is a symbolic ritual which expresses denial of death rather than acceptance of death as a natural part of life.²⁴ Kwon also argues that making up the face of the deceased and dressing the corpse in everyday attire encourages death-denying notions, which may impede a successful grieving process.²⁵ Koreans do not apply any make-up to the deceased. Also, the body of the deceased is always dressed in grave clothes made of hemp, not a dress or suit. If Korean American Methodists could apply the traditional Korean burial and caretaking ceremonies (*sup* and *yom*, rather than make-up and embalming), it would not only help them accept the death of their loved ones, but they would also be able to effectively express their emotions and grieve their loss through the benefit of culturally relevant funeral rituals. Culturally

²¹ Kwon, 411.

²² Kwon, 410.

²³ Kwon, 410.

²⁴ Kwon, 410.

²⁵ Kwon, 411.

relevant Korean pre-funeral rituals are more effective in assisting Korean Americans through their grieving processes as they negotiate life in a multicultural society. However, funeral directors and ministers still need to find harmonious ways to give comfort to the bereaved and to help the bereaved grieve their losses.

Alternative Ritual Elements in the Funeral Service

Some American funeral ritual practices may compensate the weaknesses of Korean funeral rituals in terms of facilitating meaningful grieving processes. In this section, I will explore American funeral elements that are helpful to Korean American mourners.

1. Testimony during the Funeral Service

During the funeral service, a testimony by one of the bereaved family members or other mourners who was close to the deceased often offers a great consolation and a form of cathartic release by creating conditions under which mourners can become actively involved in the expression of feeling. Testimonies have become significant aspects of contemporary funeral services. They purify the mind and facilitate deep sorrow and grief. According to Christian Beels, family witnesses or an audience of “outsider” witnesses play an important role in the psychotherapeutic process of grieving and as part of the funeral rite of passage.²⁶ For Beels, the testimonies offered during many familiar social events, such as birthday parties, funeral services, group therapy sessions, or hospital discharge conferences, have potential therapeutic efficacy for the participants in these events.²⁷ Based upon Beels’ argument about the role of witness, the testimony of a bereaved family member or the witness of people who were special to the deceased may contribute to creating a meaningful funeral service and facilitate the grief process of mourners. For the most

²⁶ Christian Beels, “Psychotherapy as a Rite of Passage,” *Family Process* 46, no. 4 (2007) : 421.

²⁷ Beels, 422.

part, Korean funeral rituals do not have a time for mourners to share testimonies and commemorate the life of the deceased, while American funeral services frequently offer a time for testimony. Although in cases of unexpected death, such as sudden death, death by violent means, or suicide, it may not be appropriate to have a time of witness by mourners, some form of eulogy may provide an opportunity to express the deep sorrow and lamentation of mourners who are experiencing acute grief. In addition, memorialization and commemoration of the deceased through a testimony time can play an important role in connecting the bereaved with the deceased. Some Korean American churches consent to providing a time for testimony during the funeral service, but it differs from church to church in the Korean American community. If Korean American churches made it a common practice to include a time of witness during the funeral service, this would greatly improve the efficacy of funeral services in helping mourners accept the death of the deceased and to connect the bereaved with the deceased.

2. Creating Rituals for the Funeral Service

Creating rituals for the funeral offers an opportunity to creatively and effectively facilitate grief. Linda Colvin argues that the funeral should be more creative in its ritualistic elements in order to help the bereaved connect with the reality of their loss.²⁸ She gives the example that, in recent years, many couples have actively created their own wedding ceremonies. For instance, they write their own vows and songs, and their friends give the wedding homily. Colvin asserts that the present shift toward more active involvement not only makes for wedding ceremonies that are more meaningful to young couples, but it also provides a means by which

²⁸ Linda M. Colvin, "The Creative Funeral," in *Grief and the Meaning of the Funeral*, ed. Otto S. Margolis, et al. (New York: MSS Information, 1975), 106.

individual expressions can be shared with others.²⁹ Likewise, Colvin asserts that the funeral should move in this direction, and funeral directors have the responsibility for fostering such a change in practice.³⁰ She believes that a creative funeral ritual can be a means for freely expressing acute grief. Creative funeral rituals, as individual or family-oriented ceremonies, may include displaying pictures of the deceased during the period of the funeral, celebrating the deceased's life through works of art or literature created by family members, and or giving an eulogy that includes scriptures or poetry which were significant to the deceased.³¹

Similar to Colvin's emphasis on the importance of families creating funeral rituals for their loved ones, Rosen discusses how funeral rituals are often modified and may be newly created according to changing family dynamics or conditions.³² According to Rosen, creating funeral rituals has the potential to help mourners face death and to facilitate grief.³³ From this perspective, funeral directors and ministers need to gain knowledge about the history, unique characteristics, and situation of the bereaved family in order to develop appropriate funeral rituals.

Funeral rites become more meaningful when bereaved family members create their own elements based on their past experiences or specific family history. Koreans, including Korean Americans, mostly tend to follow the direction of a funeral director or minister and to maintain traditional Korean customs as they make funeral preparations. They do not attempt to develop their own funeral rituals and creative grieving ceremonies. Although culturally relevant funeral rites are clearly meaningful to Korean mourners, creative rituals relevant to a specific family's history or experiences would also be helpful to Korean mourners in terms of facilitating

²⁹ Colvin, 106-107.

³⁰ Colvin, 107.

³¹ Colvin, 107.

³² Rosen, 135.

³³ Rosen, 135.

expressions of grief and its attendant emotions. Creating funeral rituals based on the specific experiences of Korean American immigrant life could be a healing activity for Korean Americans, who not only are externally experiencing oppression, rejection, and discrimination, but also internally suffering from identity crises, low self-esteem, and *han*.

3. The Ceremonial Expression of Anger and Resentment

During the Korean American funeral service, the ceremonial expression of anger and resentment against oppression, rejection, or powerlessness could be a creative ritual for Korean American mourners. Just as rape victims can facilitate their grief through ritualized expression of anger and hostility in feminist spirituality groups,³⁴ creative funeral rituals dealing with the experiences of oppression, powerlessness, or discrimination may be helpful for Korean Americans in order to ease their deep sorrow that is connected to anger and resentment at their experiences in the United States.³⁵ For instance, during the funeral service, reciting a poem reviewing the lives of marginalized persons or narrating the oppressed experience of the deceased can be a funeral ritual that expresses anger and resentment against oppression or rejection. Together, the sharing of testimonies and the creating of funeral rituals based upon specific family experiences and the oppressed lives of Korean Americans can be practices that offset the lack of meaningful funeral rites, death-denying notions, and the discontinuity with the deceased that both white Americans and Korean Americans experience.

Post-Funeral Rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church

1. Creating Post-Funeral Rituals

Creating post-funeral rituals related to specific family experiences or

³⁴ Jacobs, 297.

³⁵ Jacobs, 297.

developing culturally relevant rituals has the potential to remedy the issues of Korean American funeral rituals. In particular, familial and culturally relevant post-funeral rituals can offer an opportunity for ongoing connection with the deceased and successful grief resolution. Romanoff and Terenzio indicate that western funeral directors and therapists have failed to help the bereaved maintain connection with the deceased, while they have focused on the psychological (transformative) and social (transitional) functions of funeral rituals.³⁶ However, they believe that the transformative and transitional functions can also play a role in the development of a changed relationship with the deceased.³⁷ For them, successful grief resolution should fully entail three types of grief work (none of them should be neglected): transformation, transition, and continuity of connection with the deceased. From this perspective, creating post-funeral rituals associated with maintaining a bond with the deceased can help the bereaved grieve their loss and commemorate special memories of the deceased.

According to Taylor's study, in contemporary society, individuals tend to create their own post-funeral rituals if the right ritual to meet a need is not available.³⁸ He found that most participants consciously maintained a bond with the deceased by developing their own rituals of remembering, because rituals associated with keeping a bond with the deceased helped them experience a lessening of painful emotions.³⁹ Taylor observes that carrying out connective and commemorative rituals helped participants feel "the closeness of the deceased but also recalling happier times

³⁶ Romanoff and Terenzio, 702.

³⁷ Romanoff and Terenzio, 705.

³⁸ P. Vale Taylor, "We Will Remember Them: A Mixed-Method Study to Explore Which Post-Funeral Remembrance Activities Are Most Significant and Important to Bereaved People Living with Loss, and Why Those Particular Activities Are Chosen," *Palliative Medicine* 23 (2009) : 537.

³⁹ Taylor, 541-42.

provided a ‘balance’ against the pain of the present.”⁴⁰ He emphasizes the importance of continuity of connection with the deceased as part of the bereavement process, as Romanoff and Terenzio also do. This study illustrates the importance of objects with a personal meaning for the bereaved: wearing a particular item, collecting a number of items belonging to the deceased, or setting up a sort of shrine in the bedroom. Also, younger participants in the study tended to think that remembrance is “in the mind,” and things around them will not remain static. Many of the participants felt that music was a significant means for facilitating the recall of memories and the expressing of emotions. Most elderly participants felt uncomfortable about shedding tears in public, but they agreed that the repression of tears was not helpful to them. In addition, recalling stories of past experiences with the deceased and sharing memories with special people help grieving persons find connections and meanings in the present. In this study, gender made a difference in the type of post-funeral rituals that were preferred. Women tended to choose post-funeral rituals that were communal, while men tended to desire post-funeral rituals that were solitary. Taylor divides post-funeral rituals into four different categories:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Category A: | Rituals carried out ‘for’ the deceased
Take up an interest enjoyed by deceased
Attend an event that deceased would have attended
Listening to music enjoyed by the deceased
Watching television programs enjoyed by the deceased |
| Category B: | Rituals with a ‘direct link’ to the deceased
Visiting grave/crematorium/place where ashes buried/scattered
Revisiting special places
Displaying photographs of deceased as a reminder of deceased
Talking to deceased
Writing a letter to deceased
Wearing or carrying something as a reminder of deceased |
| Category C: | Rituals and Community
Talking about deceased with other people |

⁴⁰ Taylor, 542.

- Spending time with people who were special to deceased
- Looking at photographs of the past with other people
- Having a special meal to remember deceased
- Attending a Remembrance Service at hospice or church
- Organizing a Memorial Service (separate from funeral service)
- Name in a Memorial Book
- Planting something in memory of deceased
- Dedicating something in memory of deceased
- Bequest of possessions to others for remembrance
- Attending a church or faith community for support
- Category D: Rituals undertaken as an 'Act of Remembrance'
- Lighting a candle in remembrance
- Putting flowers by a photograph at home in remembrance
- Creative rituals (e.g. write family story).⁴¹

If Korean American churches encourage the bereaved to choose various and creative post-funeral rituals according to their emotional and spiritual needs, they can assist the bereaved in effectively grieving their feelings of loss and moving through painful emotions.

2. Frequent Memorial Services

However, while mourners in contemporary American society frequently develop post-funeral rituals according to their needs, Koreans tend not to do this. Although Koreans have traditionally considered it important to practice ongoing bereavement rituals, this precious legacy has mostly disappeared, due to urbanization and rapid social change. Without formal, traditional rituals to practice, Koreans do not consider creating their own post-funeral rituals to connect them with the deceased. Traditional Korean memorial services (*cherye*) are held a minimum of eight times a year to show how important it is for Koreans to maintain a bond with the deceased or ancestors. When an eldest brother celebrates ancestor worship in his house, his younger brothers must go to his house for the worship. There are three types of

⁴¹ Taylor, 541.

cherye: “tea rites” (*charye*), household rites (*kijesa*), and seasonal rites (*sije*).⁴²

Through frequent memorial services and ancestor worships (*cherye*) as post-funeral rituals, Koreans were traditionally able to grieve their feelings of loss and facilitate their grief. However, as a result of urbanization, many young people have been unable to experience household ancestor worship ceremonies.⁴³ While they are usually able to get time off to visit their hometowns on national holidays for tea ceremonies, such as the lunar New Year and the Harvest Festival, household or seasonal ceremonies are not held.⁴⁴ While some younger people still hold household ancestor worship ceremonies, it is impossible to find statistics on this tendency. Lee mentions the fact that ancestor worship has become increasingly popular in cities in recent years in spite of urbanization and rapid social change.⁴⁵ Interestingly, this tendency is found in Korean Christian families. Although they do not worship their ancestors, they frequently have memorial services (*chudosik*) five times a year. Christian memorial services are held on lunar 1:1 (*sul*), 5:5 (*tano*), 8:15 (*chusuk*) and on the autumn solstice (*tongjinnal*), and they are also held at home at midnight on the night before the death day of the deceased (*ki-il*). Although some conservative Korean Protestants strongly oppose ancestor worship or Christianized memorial services on national holidays, most Korean Protestants do practice Christianized memorial services. This tendency for Korean Christians to have memorial services is evidence of the syncretization of Korean Christianity and Confucianism. Jung Young Lee sees that ancestor worship is not only a way of life to reinforce solidarity among family members but is also an opportunity to learn about filial piety. He suggests that Korean Christians accept ancestor worship as a way of worshiping with one’s ancestors, while

⁴² Lee, “Practice of Traditional Family Rituals in Contemporary Urban Korea,” 173.

⁴³ Lee, “Practice of Traditional Family Rituals in Contemporary Urban Korea,” 175.

⁴⁴ Lee, “Practice of Traditional Family Rituals in Contemporary Urban Korea,” 175.

⁴⁵ Lee, “Practice of Traditional Family Rituals in Contemporary Urban Korea,” 175.

rejecting the concept that one is idolizing the deceased or one's ancestors.⁴⁶ In the same way that Koreans grieve and commemorate the deceased through tea rites and household and seasonal ancestor ceremonies, Korean Christians grieve and commemorate the deceased by practicing rites that help them maintain a continuity of connection with the deceased. If Korean American Christians recognize the importance of and practice frequent memorial services in the context of their multicultural society, they will be able to experience effective resolutions to their grief. In addition, they will create opportunities for close kin to gather and for children to be educated about Korean traditions and their cultural heritage.

⁴⁶ Jung Young Lee, *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 36.

CHAPTER 7

Proposed Funeral Rites for the American Korean Methodist Churches

In the previous chapters, I examined the understandings of death found in traditional Korean religions, in the “Sunday Service” of John Wesley, and in Korean American theology. I also discussed the purposes and functions of funeral rituals, and I explored the possibilities for alternative funeral rituals for the American Korean Methodist Church. In this chapter, I examine the order of funeral services and rituals for the United Methodist Church and those found in the *Korean Methodist Book of Worship*. In doing so, I analyze the ritual contents of each service, such as music, prayers, scripture readings, sermons, and commendations. Based upon this work, the current chapter proposes a new funeral service for the KMC in the U.S.

Funeral Services and Rituals of the United Methodist Church

The funeral rites of the UMC consist of three services: “A Commendation at the Time of Death,” “A Service of Death and Resurrection,” and “A Service of Committal.” Ministers in the UMC use *The United Methodist Book of Worship* as a guideline for leading funeral rites.

1. “A Commendation at the Time of Death”

The United Methodist Book of Worship recommends that the pastor pray the Lord’s Prayer or Psalm 23 when a person is about to die.¹ If the dying person wants to receive Holy Communion or the Baptismal Covenant, the pastor should provide these services for the individual. The pastor may pray one or more of several prayers, including the “Prayer with the dying.”² The service, “A Commendation at the Time of Death,” is performed after a person has already died. In this service, the pastor lays

¹ United Methodist Church (U.S.), *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 166.

² See Appendix A-1.

his or her hands on the head of the dying person and says the “Commendation with the dying.”³ *The United Methodist Book of Worship* emphasizes that the pastor should minister to the bereaved immediately after the commendation.⁴ For the ministry to the bereaved, the pastor may pray extemporaneously, or pray the “Prayer after the commendation.”⁵

2. “A Service of Death and Resurrection”⁶

According to *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, the purpose of the service of death and resurrection is not only to assemble those who mourn the loss of the deceased but also to provide a means by which the mourners may partake of the truth and hope that Christian worship affirms.⁷ The service of death and resurrection includes a memorializing part during which the bereaved family or friends speak about the deceased, share memories of the person, give thanks for the person, or read a poem or letter.⁸

According to Gene Fowler, *The United Methodist Book of Worship* considers the ritual contents, such as music, prayers, scripture readings, sermons, and commendations, to be the most significant elements in a service of death and resurrection.

A. Music

The order of the “Service of Death and Resurrection” includes music at the beginning of the service, such as during the gathering; between scripture readings; at some point after the sermon; and finally, at the end of the service.⁹ The minister preparing the service should choose the type of music to sing. She or he can choose

³ See Appendix A-2.

⁴ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 167.

⁵ See Appendix A-3.

⁶ See Appendix B.

⁷ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 139-40.

⁸ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 149.

⁹ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 141-51.

hymns, such as psalms or liturgical songs containing biblical lyrics (canticles), anthems, or verses.¹⁰ *The United Methodist Book of Worship* provides a list twenty-eight possible hymns found in *The United Methodist Hymnal*. This list includes a wide variety, from “The Church’s One Foundation” to “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.” The worship book also refers ministers to the following sections in the hymnal: “Death and Eternal Life,” “Communion of Saints,” “Eternal Life and Funerals,” and “Memorial Services.”¹¹ In addition to hymns, the minister can choose other types of music, such as contemporary Christian music.

B. First Prayer

The first prayer may be offered in one of two places. It may be said before the scripture readings or offered after the sermon, creed, and music. The United Methodist service book provides three optional prayers for possible use as the first prayer of the service.¹² The first option focuses on petitioning for God’s help. The second optional prayer gives thanksgiving for those who have died before and then expresses gratitude for the person for whom the funeral is being held. The third option is a prayer of confession followed by an assurance of pardon.

C. Scripture Readings or Lessons

The United Methodist service book contains one Old Testament lesson, one New Testament lesson, and one gospel reading. For the Old Testament lesson, two Isaiah passages and a Job passage are part of a suggested list containing nineteen Old Testament readings, which is found in a section on additional funeral resources that follows the committal service outline.¹³ The service book also suggests Old Testament readings “for an untimely or tragic death” and “at the service for a person

¹⁰ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 160-61.

¹¹ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 160-61.

¹² *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 142-43.

¹³ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 159-60.

who did not profess the Christian faith.”¹⁴ For the New Testament lesson and the gospel lesson, the minister chooses from lists similar to the Old Testament list of possible readings.

D. Sermon

The United Methodist Book of Worship does not prescribe the content of funeral or memorial sermons. However, it does make the following suggestions: “A sermon may be preached, proclaiming the gospel in the face of death. It may lead into, or include, the acts of naming and witness.”¹⁵

E. Second and Following Prayers

The second prayer in the service may take the form of a “pastoral prayer, a series of shorter prayers, or a litany.”¹⁶ This second prayer is specifically a prayer of intercession for the mourners. The commendation immediately follows this prayer. Then a prayer of thanksgiving, in which God is praised, follows the commendation and leads into the Lord’s Prayer.¹⁷

F. Commendation

The United Methodist Book of Worship instructs pastors to stand near the coffin when they say the commendation, and they are also given the option of laying their hands on the coffin or urn as the commendation is said.¹⁸ Unlike other Protestant denominations, the United Methodist order of worship follows the commendation with prayers and a hymn.¹⁹

3. “A Service of Committal”²⁰

The committal service happens at the cemetery where the body is to be buried

¹⁴ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 163-64.

¹⁵ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 149.

¹⁶ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 149.

¹⁷ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 150-51.

¹⁸ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 150.

¹⁹ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 150.

²⁰ See Appendix C.

or entombed in a mausoleum (a building containing crypts in which caskets are placed). If ashes are to be buried instead of a body, the urn containing the ashes may be buried in a grave or placed in a columbarium, which is like a mausoleum for ashes.²¹

The committal service traditionally occurs after a service of death and resurrection. Mourners typically drive in a procession to the cemetery following the funeral.²² When the body is to be buried, the pallbearers carry the casket to the hearse right after the service of death and resurrection, with the minister leading the way. When the procession of cars arrives at the cemetery, the pallbearers, again led by the minister, carry the casket to the burial site or to a building at the cemetery where the committal service takes place.²³ If the family desires, they can request that the committal service be private, so that others who attended the service of death and resurrection are not at the committal service.

In summary, *The United Methodist Book of Worship* provides the rituals and orders of worship for UMC pastors who need to carry out rites surrounding the death of a person. These rites include a commendation at the time of death, a service of death and resurrection, and a service of committal. These rituals of the UMC have developed under the influence of the dominant American culture as well as the Methodist tradition. However, these funeral rituals do not necessarily meet the needs of non-American or ethnic Methodist churches because of the huge diversity of traditions associated with different cultures, races, and ethnicities and their specific theological understandings about death, resurrection, and life after death. Like other non-American Methodist churches, the KMC was faced with difficulties when it tried

²¹ *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 155.

²² Fowler, *Caring through the Funeral*, 111.

²³ Fowler, *Caring through the Funeral*, 111.

to fully implement the services of the UMC's *Book of Worship*. As a result of these issues, the KMC has developed its own book of worship, including an order of funeral service and related rituals, through integrating Korean culture, its theological perspective, and its own circumstances. In the next section, I will examine the funeral services and rituals of the KMC in order to compare them with the funeral services of the UMC and to develop appropriate funeral rituals for the KMC in the U.S.

Funeral Services and Rituals of the Korean Methodist Church in Korea

The funeral services and rituals of the KMC in South Korea are mostly influenced by the funeral services of the UMC, because the KMC drew upon the UMC tradition when it established its own rituals, laws, and doctrines. However, in order to offer comfort to persons for whom the Christian faith is unfamiliar, and to propagate Christian faith among non-believers, the funeral rites of the KMC have taken into account the traditions of Shamanism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, since these are major religious influences on Korean culture. As I discuss the funeral services of the KMC, I will explore how these influences have made the KMC's services different from those of the UMC.

1. The Composition of the KMC Funeral Tradition

The funeral rites of the KMC consist of four services: "A Commendation at the Time of Death," "A Service for Placing the Corpse in the Coffin," "A Service of Death and Resurrection," and "A Service of Committal."²⁴ While the UMC only has three funeral services, the KMC adds "A Service for Placing the Corpse in the Coffin (*Ipkwansik*)," because Koreans have traditionally believed that performing a religious ceremony when placing the corpse in the coffin is very important.

²⁴ The Korean Methodist Church (South Korea), *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, (Seoul: KMC, Board of Communication & Publication, 2002), 53-60.

2. A Service for Placing the Corpse in the Coffin (*Ipkwansik*)²⁵

Traditionally, Korean funeral rituals have adhered to strict Confucian norms, such as delineating clear, fixed hierarchical lines between genders and valuing ancestors.²⁶ Thus, funerals have been occasions for securing hierarchical relationships between men and women and for mourning the deceased, who, according to Confucian understandings, will become an ancestor. Because the deceased will become an object of ancestor worship, Korean people have believed that they have to exercise due diligence in funeral preparations for a deceased person, as long as the person was an ancestor and not a child or childless person. For example, on the day following the death of the deceased, the body is washed (*sup*) and wrapped (*yom*) as part of the process of preparation for the journey to the other world. In order to wash the body, Artemisia or sandalwood is mixed in lukewarm water. Then the chief mourners wash the body with the mixture. After drying the corpse, the hair is combed and hair that comes out is carefully collected. Fingernails and toenails are carefully trimmed. These clippings are also collected. The loose hair and the clippings are then placed in five small pouches called *Choballang*. Later, the *Choballang* are placed in the coffin along with the corpse.²⁷

The second step in the preparation of the body is inserting old coins and rice into the mouth of the deceased. With a wooden spoon made from a willow tree, three spoonfuls of rice are fed to the corpse. Then, metal coins are inserted into the deceased's mouth. It has been thought that "the journey by the deceased soul to the next world could be eased by the rice and money the family had bestowed upon the

²⁵ See Appendix D-1.

²⁶ AsianInfo.org., *Korean Funeral Rites*, April 9, 2000, http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/cel/funeral_rites.htm (accessed May 12, 2009), 1.

²⁷ Kwang-Kyu Lee, "The Practice of Traditional Family Rituals in Contemporary Urban Korea," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3, no. 2 (1989) : 171.

departed.”²⁸ The third preparatory step is wrapping and dressing the corpse (*yom*). The bereaved family and relatives wrap the corpse in hemp cloth, dress it, and place it into the coffin. The corpse is fully dressed in *suui*, the traditional death dress, which is made from either hemp or cotton. The coffin is then bound with ropes seven times. The coffin has to be placed carefully in a dry and secure place within the house.²⁹

These preparations for placing the corpse in the coffin are very complicated and detailed and must be strictly adhered to, because these preparations demonstrate veneration and filial piety toward the deceased and soon to be ancestor. However, these ceremonies also offer an opportunity to feel consolation and to stabilize emotions. Recognizing the significance of these preparations for placing the corpse in the coffin, the Korean Methodist Church created a service for this tradition. In the KMC, this service is called “*ipkwansik*.”³⁰ Generally, the service of *ipkwansik* takes place at the beginning of an evening for viewing the body of the deceased, either at the hospital or at the funeral home, but not necessarily in the funeral chapel.³¹

After the service, the bereaved family and relatives may stay for the duration of the viewing and offer comfort and support to the immediate family. The pastor is not expected to remain for the entire evening. Currently, in South Korea, the “Service at the Time of Death” or the “Service of *Ipwansik*” takes place at a hospital. Most Korean hospitals provide a place to perform religious rites for placing the corpse in a coffin, because they recognize that such religious rituals are traditionally important. They often allow bereaved family members, relatives, and church members to enter their morgues for the service of *ipkwansik*.

3. A Service of Death and Resurrection and A Service of Committal

²⁸ AsianInfo.org., *Korean Funeral Rites*, 2.

²⁹ Lee, “Practice of Traditional Family Rituals in Contemporary Urban Korea,” 171.

³⁰ Seog Wan Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices” in *Worship Across Cultures: A Handbook*, ed. Kathy Black (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 158.

³¹ Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices,” 158.

On the third day after the death of the deceased, a service of death and resurrection, which is called the service of “*balin*,”³² takes place at 7 or 8 a.m. The early time is due to the fact that the bereaved family may want to bury the body in the hometown of the deceased some distance away. The service of *balin* takes place at the funeral home, hospital morgue, or the church. When people enter the place for the service, they may see a reception table with a receptionist ready to receive envelopes with money inside brought by guests to aid the family with the funeral expenses.³³ They then register in a book with their names and addresses. During the funeral service, the casket is closed or open, depending on the family’s wishes. The service usually lasts about an hour.

After the service of death and resurrection, there is often a car procession from the place of the service to the cemetery. The pastor leads “the procession with the oldest son carrying the picture of the deceased draped in black ribbon.”³⁴ The pallbearers carry the coffin into the cemetery, and the bereaved family and relatives follow the coffin. Then the “Service of Committal” or “The Service of *Hakwan*” is performed.³⁵ After the “Dismissal with Blessing,” the mourners may each place a flower on the grave or the casket before they leave. Also, following the service, there is often a reception at a restaurant.

4. Distinctions in the Funeral Rites of the Korean Methodist Church

The first difference between the funeral rites of the KMC and the UMC is the use of terminology. While the term “funeral service” is used in the Korean tradition for the final ceremony offered on the day of burial, the term “memorial service” is

³² See Appendix D-2.

³³ Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices,” 158.

³⁴ Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices,” 158.

³⁵ See Appendix D-3.

used to describe the ceremony which honors the anniversary of someone's death.³⁶ Therefore, congregants in the Korean Methodist Church in South Korea still recognize that the funeral is the service of *balin* offered on the day of burial, even though the KMC also uses the term "funeral" to describe the whole three-day process, including the commendation at the time of death, the service of *ipkwansik*, the service of death and resurrection, the procession, and the committal service.³⁷ Thus, no distinction is made between a service with a coffin present and a service with no coffin, as in the UMC, which would call the latter a "memorial service." For Koreans, the term "memorial service" is reserved for anniversary ceremonies.

The second distinction concerns cremation. Because the Buddhist concept of metempsychosis is part of Korean culture, Koreans generally frown upon cremations, and some Christians believe the "resurrection of the body" is not possible if the body is cremated.³⁸ Therefore, burial of the body is the most common practice in the KMC, even though the appearance of the body has been positively changed. The body of the deceased is dressed in special clothes (sometimes the traditional Korean dress, *hanbok*) and placed in the coffin with a Bible and possibly other items, such as rings, money, or pictures.³⁹ Korean pastors, then, need to be cautious about speaking to the bereaved concerning a choice between burial or cremation.

The third distinction is a vigil on the first night after the death. In Korea, the bereaved family, relatives, and church members have an all-night vigil at the funeral home or hospital, with the coffin open for viewing, on the first night after a person has died.⁴⁰ During this night, the bereaved family and relatives not only pray for the deceased, but they also serve visitors who come to the funeral home to see the

³⁶ Cho, "Korean-American Worship Practices," 157.

³⁷ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 10.

³⁸ Cho, "Korean-American Worship Practices," 157.

³⁹ Cho, "Korean-American Worship Practices," 158.

⁴⁰ Cho, "Korean-American Worship Practices," 158.

bereaved and the deceased.

The fourth distinction is the death of a child. In Korea, there is a belief among some that “a child who dies before a parent is being ‘undutiful’ or is bringing the parents bad luck.”⁴¹ Some parents will not attend the funeral service of their child for this reason. They may feel guilty and suffer from great distresses. Therefore, KMC pastors are encouraged to provide sensitive, ongoing care to parents who lose a child.

In brief, the influences of Confucianism and Buddhism are considerably evident in the whole process of funeral services and rituals in the KMC. Although most American Korean Methodist churches follow the order of services in the *Korean Methodist Book of Worship [Yemoon]*, they are not inclined to use its order of funeral services and rituals because of the differences in cultural context and the difficulties these create. They have yet to formulate new forms of funeral rituals that fit the contexts of the bereaved in the KMC in the American Conference of the KMC.

Composition of the Funeral Services for the American Korean Methodist Church

Since the funeral tradition of the KMC consists of four services, a composite of four services is appropriate for American Korean Methodist Churches. Generally, hospitals in the United States just allow the bereaved or clergy to enter morgues in order to see the deceased, and they do not allow any services for placing a corpse in a coffin (*ipkwansik*). However, the Korean American funeral industry is able to provide not only a chapel for a service of *ipkwansik* on the day following the death of the deceased but also a chapel for a service of death and resurrection (*balin*) on the third day.⁴² Therefore, it is possible to have all four funeral services.

Commendation and Commendatory Prayers at the Time of Death

⁴¹ Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices,” 159.

⁴² Other American funeral homes might do this, too, if they understood the traditions. It would be a good thing for pastors to make connections with local funeral home directors.

Ko emphasizes that ministers should visit a bereaved family as soon as they know of the death, since they are the persons to whom the bereaved turn for comfort and guidance in the midst of their grief.⁴³ The presence of a minister can be both comforting and stabilizing during the first stage of shock and grief. In addition, the presence of a minister during the last moments of life offers great comfort to the bereaved and their relatives, so, if possible, a minister should be present at this time. For Korean Methodists in the U.S. it is appropriate to follow the KMC's tradition of performing a ritual for a person near death that includes prayers, scripture readings, hymns, and a commendation.

1. A Prayer with the Dying Person

In most cases, the minister will use his or her own preplanned or extemporaneous prayer during the last moments of a dying person. If the dying person wants to receive Holy Communion or the Baptismal Covenant, the pastor should provide these services for the dying. The minister may pray the Lord's Prayer or Psalm 23 when death is near. The following prayer may also be used at this time:

Almighty God! Look upon _____ lying in great weakness, and comfort him/her with the promise of life everlasting, given through the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ. Deliver _____ from all evil, and set him/her free from every bond; through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever, Amen.

2. A Commendation Service at the Time of Death (*Imjongsik*)

Those called to lead prayers at the time of death will seek to make every effort to prepare the dying person for her or his death. If possible, Holy Communion may be shared with friends and family as part of this preparation. When death has not occurred at home, the minister may speak to nurses or other care staff about arrangements for privacy and quiet. A chapel or quiet room is often available. Taking

⁴³ Eeungbo Ko, *Korean and English Guide Book for Rites of Korean Immigrant Church* (Seoul: Sungdo Press, 1987), 302.

into consideration Wesley's understanding of what happens to the soul after death, American Korean Methodist ministers should emphasize that the souls of the faithful dead will enter an intermediate and penultimate state in which they will remain until they are reunited with the body at the resurrection of the dead. Then they will be raised in Jesus Christ and in glory. Also, in light of the understanding of death and resurrection found in Korean American theology, ministers should emphasize hope, joy, and liberation from every bondage for Korean American immigrants. The following is my suggestion for the order of a commendation service at the time of death:

OPENING SCRIPTURES

The minister may choose 1 Corinthians 2:9, Psalm 61:2, or Psalm 23.

HOLY COMMUNION (if possible and appropriate)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

COMMENDATION

The pastor lays his/her hands on the head of the dying person and says the following:

*Depart, _____, out of this world, in the name of God Almighty who created you; in the name of Jesus Christ who redeemed you; in the name of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you. May your spirit this day be in peace, and your dwelling place in the paradise of God.*⁴⁴

HYMN

Hymn #539, [My hope is built on nothing less], in the *Korean Hymnal* is suggested.

READING OF SCRIPTURE

The minister may choose John 14:1-6, 14:27-28, or Revelation 1:1-7.⁴⁵

SERMON

COMMENDATORY PRAYER

Into your hands, O merciful God, we commend your servant _____. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. May [he/she] rest in

⁴⁴ Modified from *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 167.

⁴⁵ Korean Methodist Church, Yemoon [*The Korean Methodist Book of Worship*], 37-40.

your eternal habitation. Receive [him/her] into the arms of your mercy, into your everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in your light. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE BEREAVED

*Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord. Hear our voice.
We wait for you, O God. Our souls wait for you. Give us now your word of hope.
We know your love is steadfast, always there when we need it.
Let us feel your presence now in our time of sorrow.
Help us to look to tomorrow to see hope beyond grief, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*⁴⁶

BLESSING and DISMISSAL

The Lord bless you and watch over you; the Lord make his/her face to shine upon you, and be gracious you; the Lord look kindly upon you, and give you peace.

The pastor should minister to the bereaved family immediately following the service of commendation. At this time, the minister offers words of comfort, reads scripture, and prays with the bereaved family while the body is still present. Friends and members of the bereaved family may want to stay a while after these prayers, and can be encouraged to do so if the family does not object. Before leaving, the minister assists the family in making the funeral arrangements, often accompanying them to the funeral home.⁴⁷

A Service for Placing the Dead in the Coffin (*Ipkwansik*)

This service reminds Korean Methodists that we return to Christ into whose death we are baptized. It reminds us that we return to the Christ who feeds us with his body and blood through the symbols of bread and wine. The concept of returning to Christ is meaningful to Korean American Methodists in the context of this service, because *ipkwansik* has traditionally been understood as a symbolic ceremony preparing the dead for a journey to the next world. It may be appropriate to bring the body into the church on the evening before the funeral (the service of *balin*). The

⁴⁶ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 167.

⁴⁷ Cho, "Korean-American Worship Practices," 157.

coffin may be placed by the table for Holy Communion. The reason is that it may remind us of our birth by water and the Spirit, and the table is a sign that the deceased, who has received Christ there through bread and wine, is received by Christ into the eternal presence of God.⁴⁸ Theologically, the minister performs the service as a way of reminding the congregation that the death of a Christian is a gateway to God's eternal presence. In addition, the minister proclaims Christ's triumph over death, through which he overcame all sufferings, such as oppression, rejection, and discrimination. It is also meaningful in terms of grieving if the minister recalls the life of the deceased as a member of the congregation of God's people on earth and in heaven. At the end of the service, the congregation may be encouraged to exit in silence after the Blessing and Dismissal have been pronounced. A symbolic aid for devotion (a symbol such as a candle, a cross, or a banner) may enable those unused to silence to focus their thoughts and may also be a memento to remember the deceased. The following is recommended as the order of the service of *ipkwansik*:

GATHERING

The minister greets the family and the coffin as they arrive at the church. Someone bearing a lighted candle may precede the minister at the head of the procession into the sanctuary. The minister begins the service with the following words:

Do not be afraid (says the Lord); I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see. I am alive forever and ever. I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. (Revelation 1:17b-18a; 3:8, [Bible version, such as NRSV])

HOLY COMMUNION (if possible and appropriate)

HYMN

Hymn #541, [Face to face with Christ], in the *Korean Hymnal* is suggested.

READING OF SCRIPTURE(S)

At least one passage of scripture is read. Psalm 139:1-10 or John 14:1-6

⁴⁸ Paul Sheppy, *In Sure and Certain Hope: Liturgies, Prayers and Readings for Funerals and Memorials* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 9.

are appropriate for Korean American Methodists. A brief time of silence for reflection will normally follow.⁴⁹

SERMON

The minister proclaims hope, joy, and liberation from all sufferings. Matthew 11:28-30 or John 14:1-6 are appropriate passages for sermon reflections for Korean American immigrants.

PRAYER

Loving God, giver of life, all that we are and hold have been given on trust from you. What you have given to us we return to you. When you bring us to judgment, bless all that has been good; put right and forgive all that is wrong. Receive this soul into your eternal presence, where you are the light and joy of all your saints.

Make death the gateway to life, and raise us to the fullness of salvation. Give us grace to let go of those things to which we must no longer cling, and teach us in releasing each other to know ourselves held by you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

BLESSING and DISMISSAL

Our God, from whose love not even death can separate us, grant light in the darkness and resurrection from the dead. May the love and peace of God keep us safe from fear and lead us with all the saints to rejoice in the company of God forever. Go in peace, dear friends, for God is with you in this darkness. The Lord is your light and salvation; God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light on your path.

Those present are invited to stay for as long as they wish. Then the minister closes the coffin.

A Service of Death and Resurrection (The Service of *Balin*)

This funeral service is held before a service of committal, which will take place on the same day. According to Gene Fowler, the service books of most Protestant denominations in the U.S. recommend holding the funeral in the church where the deceased was a church member.⁵⁰ Likewise, *The Korean Methodist Book of Worship* recommends that this funeral service should be held in the church if the deceased was a member of the KMC.⁵¹ If it is held in another location, the minister can make such modifications of the order as he or she considers necessary. Because

⁴⁹ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 58-59.

⁵⁰ Fowler. 95.

⁵¹ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 30.

the KMC recognizes the importance of openness to non-Christians, the funeral service led by a KMC minister is open to all who want to attend. Before the service begins, the casket may be closed, and it may remain closed thereafter. According to Ko, music selected for the service should reflect the Christian affirmations of trust and confidence in God, comfort, the communion of saints, and hope in the resurrection.⁵² However, if the bereaved family requests music enjoyed by the deceased, the minister may approve the music for helping the mourners to grieve their loss. If the bereaved family prefers, the committal service may take place before the service of death and resurrection in the church.

In light of Wesley's theology and Korean American theology, the minister may not only confront the reality of death with the hope of resurrection, but he or she may also proclaim the triumph and joy associated with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross and the resurrection. For the deceased, there is the hope of deliverance and of glory; for the bereaved, there is an opportunity for the past to be remembered with forgiveness and for the future to be embraced with hope. A testimony by one of the bereaved family members or mourners who was close to the deceased should be included. As meaningful components of contemporary funeral services, testimonies offer great consolation and a form of cathartic release by creating conditions under which mourners can become actively involved in the expression of feeling. The sharing of a testimony eases the minds of both speaker and listeners and alleviates deep sorrow and grief.

Ko suggests that it is valuable to have a brief tribute or obituary, because both the bereaved and members of the deceased's Korean American immigrant church can look back upon and remember the life of the deceased through such an expression.

⁵² Ko, *Korean and English Guide Book for Rites of Korean Immigrant Church*, 311.

For a brief tribute or obituary, the minister or one of the bereaved may share details about the deceased's life, including the work that he or she did, the deceased's church life, his or her experiences, and/or the deceased's relationships with family or colleagues. In Korean culture, value is assigned to a person according to his or her duties and responsibilities, which are determined by the group to which that person belongs. This hierarchical evaluation is derived from Confucian tradition, in which age is valued more than youth, and men are valued more than women. *The United Methodist Book of Worship* also recommends a brief tribute or obituary reading called "Naming," to be done after the sermon in a service of death and resurrection.⁵³

In addition, the service I am proposing includes the ceremonial expression of anger and resentment associated with oppression, rejection, and powerlessness or the finality of death (while still affirming its function as a gateway to a better existence). This may be expressed by reading a poem or letter related to immigrant life. Such an expression may be helpful to Korean Americans in easing the deep sorrow that is connected to their anger and resentment at their experiences in the United States.⁵⁴ The following is the order of my suggested service of death and resurrection (the service of *balin*):

GATHERING

The minister may greet the family. Music may be played while the people gather. The pall may be placed on the coffin or urn with these words:

*Dying, Christ destroyed our death. Rising, Christ restored our life. Christ will come again in glory. As in baptism _____ put on Christ, so in Christ may _____ be clothed with glory. Here and now, dear friends, we are God's children. What we shall be has not yet been revealed; but we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Those who have this hope purify themselves as Christ is pure.*⁵⁵

⁵³ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 149.

⁵⁴ Jacobs, 297.

⁵⁵ United Methodist Church, *Come Let Us Worship*, 515.

THE WORD OF GRACE

If the coffin or urn is carried into the place of worship in procession, the minister may go before it speaking these words, with the congregation standing. Or if the coffin or urn is already in place, the minister speaks these words.⁵⁶

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and I am the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, yet shall they live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." (John 11:25) "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." (Revelation 22:13) "I died, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I hold the keys of hell and death. Because I live, you shall live also." (Revelation 1:18)⁵⁷

CALL TO WORSHIP

Friends, we have gathered here to praise God and to witness to our faith as we celebrate the life of _____. We come together in grief, acknowledging our human loss. May God grant us grace, that in pain we may find comfort; in sorrow, hope; and in death, resurrection.⁵⁸

Let us worship God and remember before him his servant, _____; in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

HYMN OR SONG

Korean Hymnal #291, [In the sweet by and by], is recommended, or the minister may choose from hymns #940-942 in the *United Methodist Hymnal*.

OPENING SENTENCES

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 may be read by the minister. Then one or both of the following sentences may be read: Matthew 11:28, Psalm 124:8.⁵⁹

THE FIRST PRAYER (INVOCATION)

The minister may offer the following prayer or an extemporaneous prayer. The first prayer should be an invocation or a request for God's mercy and peace.

Almighty God, whose love never fails and who can turn the shadow of death into daybreak: help us to receive your Word with believing hearts, so that, hearing the promises in Scripture, we may have hope and be lifted out of darkness into the light and peace of your presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.⁶⁰

HYMN OR PSALM

READING THE SCRIPTURES

⁵⁶ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 141.

⁵⁷ United Methodist Church, *Come Let Us Worship*, 515.

⁵⁸ United Methodist Church, *Come Let Us Worship*, 516.

⁵⁹ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 62.

⁶⁰ Ko, *Korean and English Guide Book for Rites of Korean Immigrant Church*, 313.

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 may be read by the minister.

Then one or more following scriptures may be used:

Psalms 23, 42, 46, 90:1-12, 103, 118, 12:1-81; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.⁶¹

The following scriptures are appropriate at the burial of a child:

Psalm 23, 1 John 3:1-2, Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthew 11:25-30, John 6:37-40.⁶²

OBITUARY (NAMING: A STATEMENT OF MEMORY)

There may be a brief tribute or an obituary may be read. This may be done by the minister or a mourner.

SERMON

While the sermon may include appropriate recognition of the life of the deceased as a Korean American immigrant, let there be a clear witness to the resurrection and our hope and comfort in Christ.

TESTIMONY

This is offered by one of the bereaved family members or mourners who were close to the deceased.

READING A POEM (OR LETTER)

This may express the finality of death or be a ceremonial expression of sufferings related to immigrant life. For example:

I had thought that your death was a waste and destruction, a pain of grief hardly to be endured. I am beginning to learn that your life was a gift and a growing and loving left with me. The destruction of death destroyed the existence of love. But the fact of death cannot destroy what has been given.

*I am learning to look at your life again instead of your death and your departing.*⁶³

SPECIAL SONG

Here a congregational hymn or the choir may be used in singing praise to God. If the family requested a piece of music enjoyed by the deceased and the minister approved it, it may be played or sung by the choir.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed may be used.

THE SECOND PRAYER (COMMENDATION)

O God, all that you have given us is yours. As first you gave ____ to us, so now we give ____ back to you.

⁶¹ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 70.

⁶² Ko, *Korean and English Guide Book for Rites of Korean Immigrant Church*, 313.

⁶³ Marjorie Pizer, "To You the Living," as cited in Sheppy, 97.

Here the minister, with others, standing near the coffin or urn, may lay hands on it, continuing:

Receive ____ into the arms of your mercy. Receive ____ up with all your people.

*Receive us also, and raise us into a new life. Help us so to love and serve you in this world that we may enter into your joy in the world to come. Amen.*⁶⁴

HYMN

This should be a hymn related to the hope of resurrection rather than a hymn of thanksgiving.

BENEDICTION

*The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.*⁶⁵

OFFERING OF FLOWERS AND RECESSIONAL⁶⁶

A Service of Committal (*Hakwansik*)

Generally, a service of committal takes place before noon in Korean culture.

As the procession forms, the minister precedes the casket to the place of interment.

When all are assembled there, the minister begins a service of committal (*hakwansik*)

by reading scriptures. The following is the order of the committal service:

OPENING SENTENCES (The pastor may read 1 Peter 1:3-4 or 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.)

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away. (1 Peter 1:3, 4)

SCRIPTURE READING (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 53, 54b-55, 57)

God who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through the Spirit that dwells in you.

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be

⁶⁴ United Methodist Church, *Come Let Us Worship*, 519.

⁶⁵ Ko, *Korean and English Guide Book for Rites of Korean Immigrant Church*, 333.

⁶⁶ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 73.

changed For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. . . . Then the saying that is written will be fulfilled:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”
*. . . . But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*⁶⁷

WORDS OF COMMITTAL

The minister may place a hand on the casket or cast earth on it, saying:

Almighty God, into your hands we commend your son/daughter ____, in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. This body we commit to the ground (to the elements, to its resting place), earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Yes, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.

After the words of committal, facing the people, the minister will say:

*I heard a voice from heaven saying, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them. (Revelation 14:13)*⁶⁸

LORD’S PRAYER

HYMN

Use hymn #230 from the *Korean Hymnal*.⁶⁹

BENEDICTION (DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING)

The minister dismisses the people with the following or another blessing:

*Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of God’s glory with rejoicing, to the only God our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*⁷⁰

Distinctions in the Funeral Services for the Korean Methodist Church in the U.S.

Just as the KMC recognizes that the term “funeral” is used in the Korean tradition for the final worship service offered on the day of the service of death and resurrection, the American KMC also follows this practice. However, English

⁶⁷ This compilation of scripture readings is taken directly from the United Methodist Church, *Come Let Us Worship*, 521.

⁶⁸ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 156.

⁶⁹ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship]*, 82.

⁷⁰ United Methodist Church, *Come Let Us Worship*, 523.

language ministries of the American KMC may use the term “memorial service” in relationship to a funeral service where the body is not present.⁷¹

A second distinction is that the American KMC service focuses theologically on hope, joy, and victory through scripture readings, a sermon, and prayers associated with the triumph of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In particular, this funeral service emphasizes that the souls of the faithful dead will enter an intermediate and penultimate state in which they will remain until reunited with the body at the resurrection of the dead and that the body will be resurrected as a spiritual body on the last day.

The third distinction is that the suggested funeral rites include culturally relevant elements. For example, the funeral service proclaims liberation from all sufferings, including oppression, rejection, and discrimination, through scriptures, the sermon, and the reading of a poem or letter related to the life of Korean Americans. In addition, there is a service for placing the body in the coffin (the service of *ipkwansik*), which is a traditional Korean ritual.

⁷¹ Cho, “Korean-American Worship Practices,” 157.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

Funeral rituals have played an important role in helping mourners acknowledge death, express painful emotions, and grieve their losses. Funeral rituals provide not only an opportunity to increase mental health through emotional catharsis, they also reinforce connection with a supernatural or divine being and increase family cohesion and group solidarity. Although funeral rituals have operated at multiple levels, rapid social change has led to the loss of meaningful funeral rituals, the denial of death, and the neglect of continuity of connection with the deceased in contemporary society. Because of these issues, American mourners have often experienced failure in grieving their losses, expressing their painful emotions, and commemorating specific past experiences with the deceased. Just as dominant culture American mourners have been challenged by these issues, Korean Americans have struggled with the lack of helpful contemporary social mourning practices and the death-denying attitudes of U.S. society. They have found it difficult to deal with the American cultural expectation that mourners hide or control their grief and get back to work as soon as possible after the funeral.

In this context, many Korean American immigrant churches have attempted to formulate new forms of funeral rites that will not only provide comfort and emotional stabilization, but also help Korean American mourners grieve their losses. The Korean UMC published *Come Let Us Worship* as an attempt at liturgical contextualization. However, while *Come Let Us Worship* addressed the need for bilingual worship resources for Korean American United Methodists, the service book did not include culturally relevant funeral rituals and service orders. Moreover, the American Conference of the KMC does not have its own worship book, one that

would address the need for services in English and Korean and for culturally appropriate funeral rites. Yet, the Korean Methodist churches that affiliate with the American Conference of the KMC tend to disregard the funeral rites outlined in the *Korean Methodist Book of Worship*, because these funeral rites are not sufficiently comprehensive or reflective of Korean American immigrant contexts.

The preceding comparative study of the dominant American funeral culture and the traditional Korean funeral culture suggests practices that can be helpful for Korean American Methodist mourners in their multicultural context. Understanding the concepts of death found in Korean religious traditions, Wesley's "Sunday Service," and Korean American theology is also helpful for developing culturally relevant funeral rites for Korean American Methodist mourners. In addition, seeking alternative rituals through a comparative study of the *United Methodist Book of Worship* and the *Korean Methodist Book of Worship* can provide guidance to Korean American Methodist ministers performing funeral services. Therefore, ministers for Korean American Methodist mourners should develop culturally relevant funeral rites and create symbolic family rituals related to specific family conditions in order to assist the bereaved in successfully resolving their grief. I have offered some suggestions in this project. Undoubtedly, Korean American Methodist ministers can help mourners in becoming healthier immigrants in American society.

Appendix A

The Commendation at the Time of Death of *The United Methodist Book of Worship*

1. The Prayer with the Dying

*Gracious God, you are nearer than hands or feet, closer than breathing.
Sustain with your presence our brother/sister _____.
Help _____ now to trust in your goodness and claim your promise of life
everlasting.
Cleanse _____ of all sin and remove all burdens.
Grant _____ the sure joy of your salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*¹

2. The Commendation with the Dying

*Depart in peace, brother/sister _____.
In the name of God the Father who created you,
In the name of Christ who redeemed you,
In the name of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you,
May you rest in peace, and dwell for ever with the Lord.*²

3. The Prayer after the Commendation

*Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord. Hear our voice.
We wait for you, O God. Our souls wait for you. Give us now your word of
hope. We know your love is steadfast, always there when we need it.
Let us feel your presence now in our time of sorrow.
Help us to look to tomorrow to see hope beyond grief through Jesus Christ
our Lord. Amen.*³

¹ United Methodist Church (U.S.), *United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 166.

² United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 167.

³ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 167.

Appendix B

The “Service of Death and Resurrection” from *The United Methodist Book of Worship*

ENTRANCE

Gathering (hymns may be sung; pall may be placed on the coffin)
 The Word of Grace (procession)
 Greeting (introductory words)
 Hymn or Song
 Prayer
 Psalm 130 (may be sung or spoken)

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

Old Testament Lesson
 Psalm 23 (may be sung or spoken)
 New Testament Lesson
 Psalm, Canticle, or Hymn (recommended here or after the Old Testament Lesson)
 Gospel Lesson
 Sermon
 Naming (a memorial statement)
 Witness (statement of thanks)
 Hymn or Song
 Creed or Affirmation of Faith (hymn or other music may precede or follow)

COMMENDATION

Prayers
 Holy Communion (The pastor may administer communion to all present who wish to share at the Lord’s table.)
 Prayer of Thanksgiving
 The Lord’s Prayer
 Hymn (may be sung during the recessional)
 Dismissal with Blessing⁴

⁴ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 139-54.

Appendix C

The Committal Service of *The United Methodist Book of Worship*

Opening Sentences

I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. Then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" But thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:51, 53, 54b-55, 57)

Prayer

Let us pray. O God, you have ordered this wonderful world and know all things in earth and in heaven. Give us such faith that by day and by night, at all times and in all places, we may without fear commit ourselves and those dear to us to your never-failing love, in this life and in the life to come. Amen.

Scripture Reading (1 Peter 1:3-9; John 12:24-26)

Committal

Almighty God, into your hands we commend your son/daughter ____, in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This body we commit to the ground (to the elements, to its resting place), earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Yes, says the Spirit, they will rest from their labors for their deeds follow them. (Revelation 14:13)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Gracious God, we thank you for those we love but see no more. Receive into your arms your servant ____, and grant that increasing in knowledge and love of you, he/she may go from strength to strength in service to your heavenly kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Hymn

Dismissal with Blessing

Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of God's glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.⁵

⁵ United Methodist Church, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, 155-57.

Appendix D

1. The “Service of *Ipkwansik*” in *The Korean Methodist Book of Worship* [Yemoon]

Silent Prayer (1 Corinthians 5:1-3)
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #541)
 Prayer (by pastor)
 Reading the Scripture (John 14:1-6)
 Sermon (by pastor)
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #230 or #534)
 Dismissal with Blessing⁶

2. The “Service of *Balin*” in *The Korean Methodist Book of Worship* [Yemoon]

Opening Sentences
 Call To Worship (pastor reads 1 Corinthians 15:20-22)
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #291)
 Common Prayer
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #2)
 Prayer (pastor may pray for comfort and commendation)
 Reading of Scripture (John 11:25-26, 1 Corinthians 15:42-44)
 Obituary and Tribute
 Sermon
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #545)
 Commendation (by pastor)
 Dismissal with Blessing⁷
 An Offering of Flowers

3. The “Service of *Hakwan*” in *The Korean Methodist Book of Worship* [Yemoon]

Opening Sentences
 Opening Prayer
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #290)
 Prayer
 Reading of Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:51-58)
 Pronouncement (The pastor throws dirt on the coffin during the pronouncement.)
 Hymn (Korean Hymnal #230 or #222)
 Dismissal with Blessing⁸

⁶ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon* [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship], 53-60.

⁷ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon* [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship], 61-74.

⁸ Korean Methodist Church, *Yemoon* [The Korean Methodist Book of Worship], 75-83.

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